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ABSTRACT

This theme issue of the "Centro Bulletin" examines media stereotypes of Latinos and presents examples of alternatives. "From Assimilation to Annihilation: Puerto Rican Images in U.S. Films" (R. Perez) traces the representation of Puerto Ricans from the early days of television to the films of the 1970s. "The Latino 'Boom' in Hollywood" (C. Fusco) examines Latino involvement, thematic treatment, and values in recent commercial films marketed for Chicanos. "From the Margin to the Center: Puerto Rican Cinema in the United States" (L. Jimenez) and "The Chicano Alternative Film Movement" (T. Ybarra Frausto) document the experiences of Puerto Rican and Chicano film makers during the 1960s and 1970s. An interview with independent filmmaker Jose Garcia Torres focuses on the politics behind the production of a public television documentary. "Not Just Black and White: AIDS Media and People of Color" (C. Saalfield and R. Navarro) reviews current films on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). "Unofficial Stories: Documentaries by Latinas and Latin American Women" (L. Kotz) focuses on new productions that document the Latina experience. "Puerto Rico: Hacia un cine nacional" (K. Garcia), in Spanish, emphasizes recent feature-length films that reflect the national Puerto Rican culture. An interview with Diego de la Texera recounts the attempt by Sandino Films to create a national Puerto Rican cinema and discusses the problems of financing independent films. "TELEVISA, Mexico's Multi-national" (J. Sinclair) explores the relationship between a monopolistic Mexican media conglomerate and American capital. "Cultura y grupos populares en la historia viva de Puerto Rico hoy" (L. Milagros Gonzalez), in Spanish, discusses the need for the media to acknowledge the everyday sources of Latino culture. A list of 60 films and videotapes is included. (FMW)

Latino Film and Video Images

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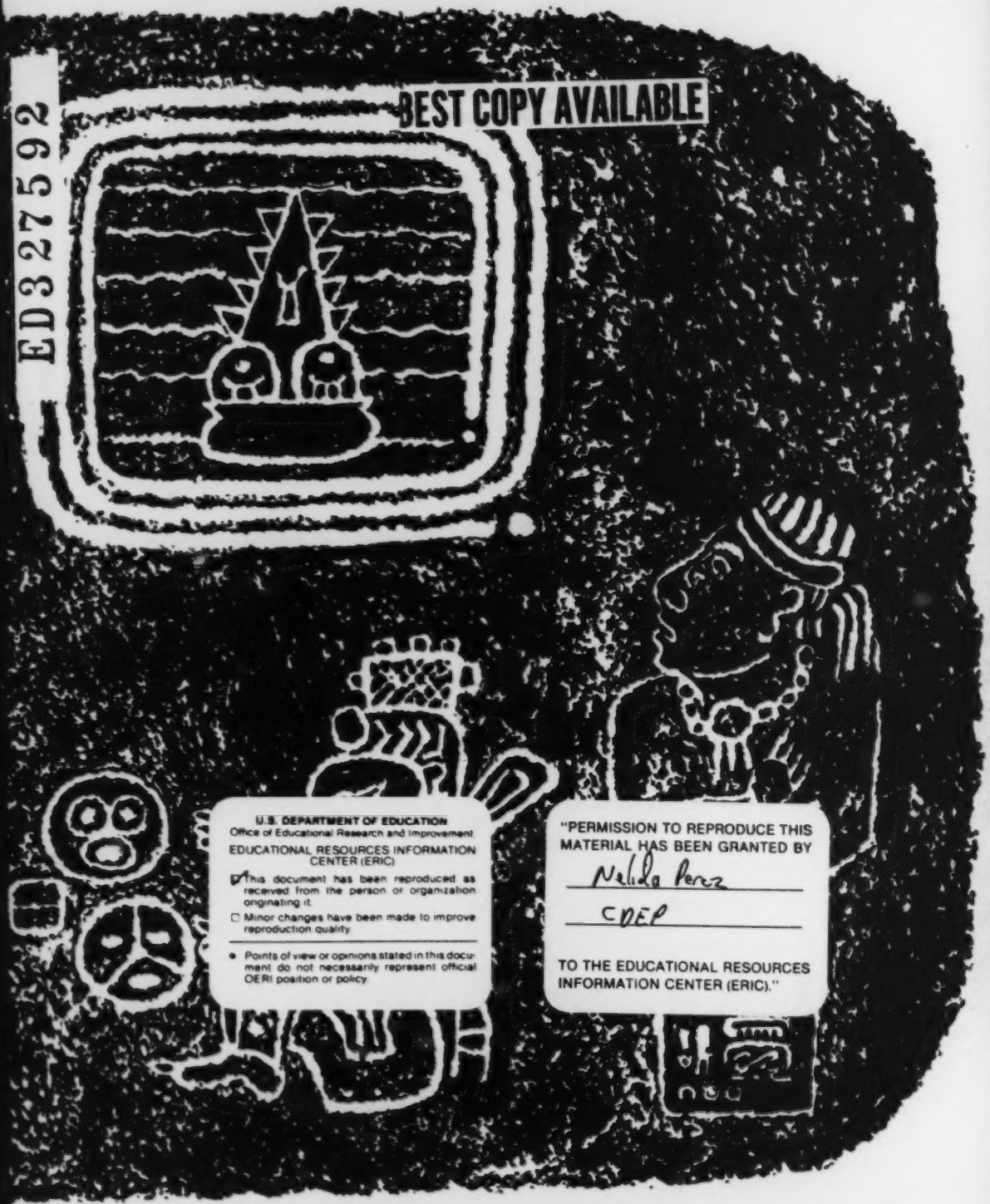

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Latino Film and Video Images

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EDITORIAL*EDITORIAL*

Today the Latino population is the fastest growing in the United States, yet we face continuing exclusion from mainstream institutions in society. Communications is an area where this is clearly evident. To look at the vast array of network and cable television programming and mass market movies, the Latino image is largely invisible. When seen at all, Latinos are most often shown as a monolithic block, ignoring national, class, racial and gender differences.

Images of a people condition not only how others see them, but also how they see themselves. If one's perceptions are formed by mass media, the majority of Latinos are drug dealers, addicts and prostitutes. The roots of this exclusion and distortion are found in the economic and racial inequalities that run to the core of U.S. society. Negative portrayals of people of color have historically served to justify their mistreatment.

In this issue of the **Centro Bulletin**, we offer some perspectives on the longstanding misrepresentation of Latino reality in the media, and on some of the most striking efforts by Puerto Ricans and other Latinos to develop alternative portrayals of our experiences. The articles by **Richie Pérez** and **Coco Fusco** begin to place these discriminatory practices in their historical contexts. **Pérez** looks back to the late 1940s—the years of the introduction of television and the birth of the "baby boom" generation—to trace the way Puerto Ricans began to figure in the commercially produced films of the day. He takes us up to the production of *Fort Apache, the Bronx* in the mid 1970s, focussing on the community struggle against the film's dehumanizing and distorting stereotypes. **Coco Fusco** concentrates on more recent commercial productions about Latinos, with primary attention to Chicanos. She shows how Hollywood attempted to capitalize on the growth of the Latino population and their potential buying power by producing a flurry of films on Latino themes. She examines the level of Latino involvement, thematic treatment and the values the films impart.

The Civil Rights and movements for social justice of the 1960s and 70s also gave birth to a struggle for cinematic representation. On the East and West coasts, Puerto Rican and Chicano film and video makers, fueled by the student, anti-war and community mobilizations taking place across the country, began to create new images of Latinos. They strove to bring out rarely told stories and to offer a different way of seeing history. **Lillian Jiménez** and **Tomás Ybarra Frausto** in their articles respectively document the parallel experiences of Puerto Rican and Chicano film and video makers during that period. Out of those struggles *Realidades*, a documentary program on public television, was initiated by the New York Puerto Rican community. Independent producer and director **José García Torres**, in an accompanying interview, reminds us that power concedes nothing without a fight, and that *Realidades* was made possible by an organized and mobilized community.

Continuing the tradition of creating media to address critical community issues, the article by filmmakers and activists **Catherine Saalfield** and **Ray Navarro** reviews the current spate of films on AIDS geared towards people of color. "Unofficial Stories: Documentaries by Latinas and Latin American Women" by **Liz Kotz** focuses on the current production by women in Latin America and the United States. These recent efforts by women to document their own reality, sensibilities and perceptions give voice to the underrepresented and add new dimensions to our understanding of the Latina experience.

In Puerto Rico, the principal obstacles to developing a national cinema

have been the lack of continuity in production and the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. In his article **Kino García** reviews the history of filmmaking on the Island, the efforts by the government of Puerto Rico in the 1950s to produce educational media, and more recent attempts to create feature length films reflective of the national culture. In an accompanying interview, **Diego de la Texera** recounts the attempt by Sandino Films to create a national cinema in the 1970s, and the problems inherent in financing independent films.

Viewpoints supported by commercial interests have no trouble gaining mass exposure and sympathetic media treatment—in a word, the mass media is class dominated, bound by the parameters of ownership in a capitalist society. The article by **John Sinclair** on Televisa, the Mexican media conglomerate, presents an example of monopoly media ownership in Mexico and its relationship to transnational capital, primarily U.S

The culture of t[illegible] media, whether the commercially-owned [illegible]d packaged or the independent alternative, continues to rely for its vitality and impact on the culture of the people. Our streets and *barrios* are the real source of our expressive and symbolic life: here is where we live and give voice to what we are and what we are struggling to become. Lived experience and life history, as defined in **Lydia Milagros González'** article, needs to be acknowledged and affirmed in the face of the media's apparent monopoly of our cultural world.

To ensure that the media continues to reflect that lived experience, films and videotapes must be distributed and exhibited in Latino communities. The **Centro Library** column lists 60 films and videotapes available to the public. The imperative is to have community organizations and institutions utilize these films and videotapes to educate and organize. ❑

EDITORIAL*EDITORIAL*

La población latina en los Estados Unidos es hoy en día la de más rápido crecimiento, aunque aún continúa confrontando problemas de exclusión de las principales instituciones de la sociedad. En el área de las comunicaciones se evidencia claramente esta situación. Al examinar la programación de las distintas cadenas de televisión y de cable, y el mercado de películas, encontramos que la imagen latina es ampliamente invisible. En aquellos casos en que los vemos, éstos son mostrados como un bloque monolítico, ignorando diferencias nacionales, de clases, raciales y de género.

En la medida en que nuestra percepción está formada por los medios masivos de comunicación encontramos que la mayoría de los latinos son vistos como vendedores de drogas, adictos y prostitutas. Las raíces de esta exclusión y distorción se encuentran en las desigualdades económicas y raciales que predominan en la sociedad norteamericana. Las representaciones negativas de la gente de color han servido históricamente para justificar su maltrato.

En este número del **Boletín** ofrecemos algunas perspectivas sobre esta falsa representación de la realidad latina en los medios de comunicación y, además, algunos de los más impresionantes esfuerzos realizados por puertorriqueños y otros latinos por desarrollar modelos alternos de nuestra experiencia. Los artículos de **Richie Pérez** y **Coco Fusco** comienzan a ubicar en su perspectiva histórica estas prácticas discriminatorias. **Pérez** examina el período de fines de los años 40 — los años de la introducción de la televisión y el inicio de la generación del "*baby boom*"— para trazar la forma en que los puertorriqueños comenzaron a figurar en los filmes comerciales de ese período. De aquí nos lleva hasta mediados de los años 70 con la producción de *Fort Apache, the Bronx*, enfocando en la lucha de la comunidad en contra de los estereotipos deshumanos y distorsio-

nados de la película. **Coco Fusco** concentra en las más recientes producciones comerciales sobre los latinos, con especial atención a los chicanos. Ella demuestra como Hollywood intenta capitalizar el crecimiento de la población latina y su potencial poder como consumidor mediante la producción de un torrente de películas con temas latinos. Ella examina el nivel del envolvimiento latino, el tratamiento de los temas y los valores que imparten las películas.

El Movimiento de Derechos Civiles de los años 60 y 70, conjuntamente con aquellos de justicia social, dieron lugar también al nacimiento de una lucha por la representación en la cinematografía. Realizadores de filmes y videos puertorriqueños y chicanos, alimentados por las movilizaciones de estudiantes, opositores a la guerra de Vietnam y por las comunidades, comenzaron a crear nuevas imágenes de los latinos. Estos se esforzaron en presentar historias poco conocidas y en ofrecer una visión distinta de la historia. **Lillian Jiménez** y **Tomás Ybarra Frausto**, en sus respectivos artículos, documentan las experiencias paralelas que durante este período tuvieron los realizadores de filmes y videos puertorriqueños y chicanos. *Realidades*, un programa documental transmitido por la emisora de servicio público, fue iniciado en Nueva York como producto de las luchas de la comunidad puertorriqueña. **José García Torres**, productor independiente y director, nos recuerda en su entrevista que el poder no hace concesiones sin que medie una lucha y que *Realidades* fue posible por la organización y movilización de la comunidad.

El artículo de los cineastas y activistas **Catherine Saalfield** y **Ray Navarro**, continuando con la tradición de usar el cine para exponer asuntos vitales para la comunidad, examina la reciente producción de filmes sobre el SIDA dirigidos hacia la gente de color. El trabajo de **Liz Kotz** enfoca en la producción actual de películas y videos por mujeres latinas en los Estados Unidos y América Latina. Los recientes esfuerzos de estas mujeres por documentar su propia realidad, sensibilidad y percepción, ofrecen voz a las pobremente representadas y añaden una nueva dimension a nuestro entendimiento de la experiencia de la mujer latina.

En Puerto Rico, los principales obstáculos en el desarrollo de un cine nacional han sido la falta de continuidad en la producción de filmes y la relación colonial entre Puerto Rico y los Estados Unidos. **Kino García** reseña en su artículo la historia del cine en la Isla, los esfuerzos del gobierno de Puerto Rico durante los años 50 por producir un cine educacional, conjuntamente con los más recientes esfuerzos de producir largometrajes reflejando la cultura nacional. **Diego de la Texera**, en su entrevista, relata los intentos que para los años 70 realizó Sandino Filmes con el propósito de crear un cine nacional y los problemas inherentes en el financiamiento de filmes producidos por independientes.

Los puntos de vista sostenidos por los intereses comerciales no tienen problemas en ganar amplia exposición y en obtener un trato positivo en los medios de comunicación. En una palabra, éstos están dominados por una clase, unidos por los parámetros de propiedad en una sociedad capitalista. El artículo de **John Sinclair** sobre Televisa, el conglomerado mexicano de medios de comunicación, presenta un ejemplo de propiedad monopolística en las comunicaciones en México y su relación al capital transnacional, principalmente norteamericano.

La cultura de las comunicaciones, ya sean éstas propiedad comercial o alternativas independientes, continúa dependiendo para su vitalidad e impacto en la cultura del pueblo. Nuestras calles y barrios son la fuente real de nuestra vida expresiva y simbólica: aquí es donde vivimos y damos voz a lo que somos y a lo que estamos luchando por ser. "La historia viva..." en la definición de **Lydia Mialgros González** según su artículo, necesita ser reconocida y afirmada en relación al aparente monopolio que tienen los medios de comunicación dentro del mundo cultural.

Para asegurar que las comunicaciones continúan reflejando la experiencia vivida, los filmes y videos deben ser distribuídos y exhibidos en las comunidades latinas. La columna de la **Biblioteca del Centro** ofrece un listado de 60 filmes y videos disponibles para uso público. El propósito es que las organizaciones e instituciones de la comunidad los utilizen como recursos para educar y organizar. ❑

From Assimilation to Annihilation:
Puerto Rican Images in U.S. Films

Richie Pérez

Discrimination against Puerto Ricans by the mass media takes three main forms: *Exclusion*—the mass media refuses to acknowledge that Puerto Ricans exist. This includes the failure of the news and television documentaries to report on our reality. *Dehumanization*—when we do appear in the mass media, we are the targets of consistent negative stereotyping, which includes ridicule of our culture and language. *Job discrimination*—Puerto Ricans are blocked from working in the mass communications industry as actors, actresses, writers, producers, editors, technicians, and reporters. We are thus prevented from bringing our unique sensibilities, awareness, concerns, and creativity to the media. This situation is not unique to Puerto Ricans. In fact, we share this problem with all people of color in America.

Media exclusion, dehumanization, and discrimination are part of the cultural domination inherent in unequal power relations, and a key feature of the historical process by which people of color have been and continue to be subordinated. Cultural domination involves racist omissions,

stereotypes, lies, and fantasies which distort history and weaken the consciousness, organization, and resistance of oppressed people. Recycled in various forms, these repeated distortions become part of the society's belief system, forming the dominant myths, symbols, vocabulary, and beliefs which define the consciousness of the nation.

Among whites, the cumulative effect of media exclusion, dehumanization, and discrimination is to strengthen the historically-rooted belief in white supremacy and the inferiority of people of color. Among people of color the effect is to deprive our children of positive role models, and to rob our entire people of our history, culture, sense of pride, and self-respect. Thus, these discriminatory actions in the media contribute to maintaining Puerto Ricans in a subordinate position in America and are used to undermine the Puerto Rican freedom movement.

Racial stereotyping in the mass media has received scholarly attention from many fields. In 1954, Gordon Allport, in *The Nature of Prejudice*, discussed the role of media-projected racial stereotyping in justifying racial hostility (Allport, 1954). In 1968, African American psychologist Alvin F. Poussaint wrote, "If the media continue, on the whole, to depict Negroes negatively and to foster white supremacy, then this will far outweigh the effects of even the best schools for Black children" (Poussaint, 1968). The negative portrayal of minorities in film,

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RICHIE PEREZ is a longtime activist, former member of the Young Lords Party, the Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Nationalists, the Committee Against Fort Apache, and is a founding member of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights. He has been teaching Puerto Rican Studies for the last 16 years and is currently Director of Organizational Development and Voter Participation at the Community Service Society. This article is part of a work-in-progress.

■ LEFT *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) RIGHT *West Side Story* (1961).

he argued, served to withdraw status from non-white peoples; and the withdrawal of status itself is a form of legitimizing white supremacy. In a *Black Scholar* article, sociologist Francis W. Alexander asks: "What better way is there to stop the exploited from getting the 'superiority of knowledge, technique and organization' than by making the exploited look funny and weak? What better way is there to keep a race down without a lot of bloodshed than by shoving sex, alcoholism and drugs on them? What better way than by stereotyping them?" (Alexander, 1976) This article will address one aspect of this complex phenomena—the images of Puerto Ricans in American films.

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■ *Post-war America*

America emerged from WW II the most powerful of the Western "democracies." At home, the war ushered in a temporary post-war period of prosperity and rapid social and economic change. During this period, the U.S. experienced dramatic population shifts. Between 1950 and 1960, the population grew by 30 million, from 150.7 million to 180 million. An explosion of births began in 1946. These "baby boomers" created a new consumer market. When they began to enter the schools in the early 1950s, their large numbers created a shortage of classrooms and teachers. There was also a significant increase in the number of teenagers working and having money to spend. The number of teenagers working while simultaneously going to school increased by 5% between 1950 and 1960.

In addition, new telecommunications technology revolutionized the mass media, making it possible to reach ever-growing audiences with the same messages. In the late 1940s, radio was still the major source of popular music. There was as yet no distinct "teenage music." In 1946, television was introduced, and 7,000 sets were sold; by 1950, 4.4 million sets had been sold.

The generation born between 1946-1964 became the largest generation in America's history. In the early 1980s, these "baby boomers" made up almost 1/3 of the nation's population. This generation created the youth culture of the 1950s and 1960s, embracing rock and roll as their music. Up until then, "race music," with its hard-driving rhythmic beat, sexually-suggestive lyrics ("little red rooster"), and references to "rocking and rolling" was confined to Black music stations at a time of widespread racism and segregation. However, by 1949, recognizing that "race music" was reaching a wider audience, including many white teenagers, *Billboard* began to call it "rhythm and blues" and to list the top sellers. In 1950, Fats Domino, Ivory Joe Hunter, Johnny Otis, and Ruth Brown all had hits on the rhythm and blues charts.

America's policy makers, professionals, religious representatives, social scientists, law enforcement personnel and parents had difficulty understanding these changes and their cultural implications. By 1946, considerable "official" attention was being devoted to "juvenile delinquency" and the "social decay" that many officials blamed for the increase of youth crime and challenging of authority. Mainstream America gradually became gripped by panic, fearful that the whole post-war generation had "gone bad." A widespread movement developed reflecting class and race hostilities, particularly the hysteria and anger of middle-class whites at challenges to the old "family values," and the spread of "lower-class culture" in general, and "race music" in particular. These fears and others eventually were grouped and identified as the "juvenile delinquency" problem. The extent of these concerns is suggested in the following section from *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (Gilbert, 1986):

> "To designate April 1948 as a month for local delinquency conventions, Attorney General Clark was enlisted to persuade the President to issue a proclamation. In part, it read: 'I do hereby call

upon the people of the United States in their homes and churches, in the schools and hospitals...in institutions for the care of delinquent juveniles, and in their hearts and minds to act individually and together for the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency.' The Committee [the Continuing Delinquency Committee grew out of an earlier national conference] sent the proclamation, signed by Truman, to every governor, to mayors of cities over 10,000, and to all the organizations that participated in the original delinquency conference. By February about twenty states and 230 cities had expressed an interest in holding conferences. By the end of the month over 11,000 handbooks and proclamations had been distributed."

By the early 1950s, worries about "social decay" and juvenile crime had intersected with growing fears of "communist expansion" and "internal subversion." Mirroring the "anti-communist crusade," the "anti-delinquency movement" began to zero in on mass culture, especially comics, movies, and rock and roll music.

This was the climate to which Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States in large numbers. We were a young community; in 1950, the median age of Puerto Ricans was 25 as compared to 35 for the total NYC population. Only about 13% of our people were over 45, as compared to more than 33% of the total New York City population. We were poorer than other New Yorkers. We spoke a different language and were a multi-racial people. It was easy to link us, as a people, to the problems troubling America. Significantly, before our mass migration to the United States, negative stereotypes of us were already operative and for decades had conditioned North Americans to view us as "inferiors."

■ *Media Stereotyping of Puerto Ricans*

Negative images of Puerto Ricans represent written and visual expressions of white superiority and Puerto Rican inferiority. They are historically constituted. These stereotypes existed even before the mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. They developed as justifications for the American seizure of the Island and for continued colonization. Overt racism was used by members of the U.S. government to justify holding Puerto Rico in a colonial, subordinate status, treating Puerto Ricans unequally, and protecting the U.S. from race "mongrelization." Senator Vardaman, senior Senator from Mississippi, spoke from the floor of the Senate in 1916, during the debate over the status of Puerto Rico and possible citizenship for Puerto Ricans.

> "So far as I am personally concerned, I really think it is a misfortune for the United States to take that class of people into the body politic. They will never, no not in a thousand years, understand the genius of our Government or share our ideals of government... I really had rather they would not become citizens of the United States. I think we have enough of that element in the body politic already to menace the nation with mongrelization." [1]

The idea of a hierarchy of races, with white Anglo-Saxon Protestants at the top, was widely accepted in America at the turn of the century. American expansionists later seized upon and distorted the scientific findings of Charles Darwin to support their expansionist ambitions. The "racial purity" goal embraced by American expansionists, home grown segregationists, and others (like the Nazis), was also shared by the eugenicists, scientists and policy makers, who argued that studies had "proven" that the lower classes and non-white peoples had "inferior genes." As the eugenicists rose in prominence in the

early 1900s, politicians used their claims to justify the sterilization of the "unfit" and limitations on the further immigration of "inferior peoples." By 1917, 16 states had passed sterilization laws (Weinberg, 1977).

Puerto Ricans, as a multi-racial people, were a natural target for the racial purists. Our ancestors are Tainos, Spaniards, and Africans. To America, however, we were, and still are just another form of "nigger," a "mongrel race," inferior to whites, and thus unprepared for equal participation and undeserving of equal treatment. A 1949 study, "Cultural Conflicts in the Puerto Rican Adjustment," part of a wave of American studies of the "Puerto Rican Problem," claimed that while Americans were "generally courteous to foreigners if they spoke in their native language or wore native dress," there were "general notions" in the U.S. that all Puerto Ricans were "oversexed" and indulged in "excessive promiscuity." According to the study, Americans believed "that the men carry knives and use them unrestrainedly, that all Puerto Ricans are ignorant, unintelligent and stupid because they do not speak English; that they are colossal liars, that they are very temperamental and hot-headed; that the island is infested with diseases and that Puerto Ricans are clannish."

The media itself continually reinforced and recycled these images of the Puerto Rican. A 1948 book, *New York Confidential*, had this to say: "Puerto Ricans were not born to be New Yorkers. They are mostly crude farmers, subject to congenital tropical diseases, physically unfitted for the northern climate, unskilled, uneducated, non-English-speaking, and almost impossible to assimilate and condition for healthful and useful existence in an active city of stone and steel....Finding themselves unable physically, mentally, or financially to compete, they turn to guile and wile and the steel blade, the traditional weapon of the sugarcane cutter, mark of their blood and heritage" (Lait and Mortimer, 1948).

In addition to these crude racial stereotypes, other more sophisticated ones emerged in the late 1950s, categorizing Puerto Ricans as helpless and ineffective victims, who either accepted their conditions passively or who were incapable of organizing themselves to effectively challenge the status quo. Social scientists of the era, many of whom claimed to be "friends" of the Puerto Rican people, cranked out dozens of books and articles explaining Puerto Rican poverty and marginalization as a consequence of our individual and collective inadequacies and failures. New, more sophisticated ways were found to say we were inferior: our culture was "dysfunctional," our families were "demoralized," our communities were "fragmented, disunited spheres for social living." Eventually, "culture of poverty" theories that blamed those discriminated against and economically marginalized for their own condition became the dominant American social science "explanation" for the Puerto Rican situation.

■ *Film Images of Puerto Ricans*

By the 1940s, the Puerto Rican community in New York had attracted the attention of government officials, academics, journalists, and a handful of novelists. By the end of the decade, the images of the Puerto Rican popularized in newspapers, magazines, and novels were being projected onto the screen.

Film, as a medium of communication, is an extremely powerful tool. Because film is a popular art, dependent upon acceptance by large "paying audiences," it is considered to represent an important index to social thought. The use of movies as propaganda vehicles during the war was one of the examples cited by Dr. Lawrence Reddick, curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature of the New York Public Libray. It was his analysis that film was particularly effective in what it said about "history, current events, and the people and places of the world." He said, "The

implied associations that are indirectly suggested and repeated by the screen stories often leave residues that are more lasting than the evocative climaxes of the films" (Reddick, 1944).

The first films dealing with Puerto Ricans recreated cinematically the anti-Puerto Rican stereotypes that had come to dominate the print media. When you think of films dealing with Puerto Ricans, *West Side Story* (1961) usually comes to mind. However, there are more than a dozen Hollywood films, made between 1949 and 1980 alone that deal with the Puerto Rican reality or in which Puerto Rican characters play a significant role. It is the *cumulative* impact of these films and the Puerto Rican images they project that we will begin to analyze.

■ *Teenagers in the Urban Jungle*

The dominant stereotype of Puerto Ricans as juvenile delinquents and young criminals, was established with *City Across the River, Blackboard Jungle, Rock, Rock, Rock, Cry Tough, West Side Story, The Young Savages,* and *The Pawnbroker.* These films also established and repeated other stereotypes, including the violent-tempered but ultimately ineffective Puerto Rican man; the mental inferior; the innocent, but sensual Puerto Rican beauty; and the "loose," "hot-blooded mama." Keep in mind that the Puerto Rican mass migration to the U.S. coincided with a mass hysteria in this country about juvenile crime and a national debate about the causes of juvenile crime and the solutions. The limiting of Puerto Rican characterizations and images to crime films effectively linked the already-established images of "otherness" and "racial inferiority" with the "modern" stereotype of criminality.

◗ *City Across the River (1949)*

Puerto Ricans made a brief appearance in the 1949 movie, *City Across the River.* This film was a cinematic adaptation of *The Amboy Dukes,* Irving Schulman's novel about juvenile delinquents in Brooklyn. One critic identified the film as a "semi-documentary with location shooting influenced by *Naked City.*[2] *City Across the River* was among the first movies that used on-location filming to establish claims of authenticity. In this movie, a group of Puerto Rican teenagers are called "spics" and are beat up by a white youth gang that objects to them using a pool room in the white gang's "turf."

Despite the elimination of most of the book's violence, rape, drug use, and strong violence, parents and teachers' groups around the nation protested against the film, especially the scenes showing gang members making zip guns in shop class and later assaulting their teacher.

◗ *Blackboard Jungle (1955)*

One Puerto Rican character appeared in this controversial movie about juvenile delinquency in New York's public schools. Morales (played by Raphael Campos) is a semi-retarded youth whose Spanish accent and problems in speaking English are the target of ridicule throughout the movie. He is unable to complete a sentence without cursing. (In the book it is the "f" word, but it's cleaned up in the movie.)

Based on the 1952 novel by Evan Hunter, *Blackboard Jungle* introduced Sidney Poitier and Vic Morrow to movie audiences. Their cinematic characters competed for leadership in the film. Morales was not their equal. He was a follower, just a part of the mob. He was portrayed as being so slow that he didn't even know when he was being made fun of.

The novel *Blackboard Jungle* has been called "the first important post-war book to deal with the problems of urban youth in conflict with adult values and adult control in a purely naturalistic way." As a film, *Blackboard Jungle* was one of the first and most important films to deal with mid-fifties juvenile delinquency. Film historians consider it a "serious film" and it was treated that way by critics and commentators at the time. It is considered to have established the plot lines and

characterizations of many imitative films that followed.

Opposition to the film focused on its supposed depiction of "the successful defiance of delinquents who reject authority and terrorize and American high school. Their success and their power, and the ambiguous but attractive picture of their culture aimed at the heart of the Film Code and its commitment to uphold the dignity of figures and institutions of authority" (Gilbert, 1986).

The film was blasted by many educators, including the principal of a Bronx vocational school who was "disturbed by the picture's exaggeration and its probable effects upon the public attitude toward the students and teachers." When the movie was scheduled to be shown at the Venice Film Festival, U.S. Ambassador Clare Booth Luce threatened to leave Italy and "cause the greatest scandal in motion picture history." The movie was withdrawn. A *Los Angeles Times* film critic panned the movie and went so far as to say it could damage U.S. prestige abroad, "particularly if it ever fell into Communist hands." The criticisms of the movie forced MGM to add disclaimers to the end of the film, an example of which read: "To our patrons: the school and situations you have just seen are not to be found in this area! We should all be proud of the facilities provided for our youth by the schools of New Brunswick and the Middlesex County vocation and technical high school. We suggest a visit to any of the fine schools in our city and county. You will be cordially welcome" (McGee and Robertson, 1982).

Blackboard Jungle was also the first major film to use a rock and roll soundtrack, specifically Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock." "Rock Around the Clock" went on to become a teenage national anthem and was the first rock record to appear on the Hit Parade for 15 weeks. With the release of the movie and riots at rock concerts, the music and juvenile delinquency became inseparable in the minds of many Americans. Many people actually believed that the music caused juvenile delinquency. Screenings of *Blackboard Jungle* frequently led to teenagers dancing in the aisles to the rock and roll music. This "wild" activity, along with reports of audiences cheering the beating and humiliation of teachers confirmed the opposition's worst fears.

The movie, a box-office hit in New York City, set an attendance record in its first ten days at the Loew's State theater. Nevertheless, the movie was banned by censors in Memphis, denounced by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the Girl Scouts, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the American Legion.

◗ *Rock, Rock, Rock (1956)*

The association between Puerto Ricans, juvenile delinquency, and rock and roll continued with the success of the vocal group Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers. Consisting of three African-Americans and two Puerto Ricans, their first record, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?" remained in the Hot Hundred for five months and sold two million copies throughout the world.

In 1956, Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers appeared in *Rock, Rock, Rock*, one of a series of rock movies that predictably featured white suburban teens fighting with their parents over attending rock and roll shows where most of the acts were Black. *Rock, Rock, Rock* marked the film debut of 13-year old Tuesday Weld, as a teenager who must raise money to buy herself a strapless gown for the big dance after her Dad takes away her allowance. At the dance, Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers try to reassure the skeptical adults that are present by singing, "I'm Not a Juvenile Delinquent."

◗ *Cry Tough (1959)*

Based on a story by Irving Shulman (author of the book upon which *City Across The River* was based), *Cry Tough* featured John Saxon as a small-time but aspiring Puerto Rican hoodlum

(whose accent changed throughout the movie). Linda Cristal played his "hot-blooded" Puerto Rican girlfriend, given to wearing skin-tight dresses and dancing "with abandon"to "exotic" Latin rhythms.

The *Motion Picture Herald* said that Saxon's popularity among teenagers was the movie's only real selling point. "Otherwise," their reviewer said, "the film will have to be sold on the basis of lurid action plus the sexy acting of Linda Cristal in the role of a tart... downbeat in the extreme, the backgrounds are depressing..."[3]

◗ *The Young Savages (1961)*

This film was based on *A Matter of Conviction*, a novel written by Evan Hunter (author of *Blackboard Jungle*, who now writes 87th Precinct mysteries under the name Ed McBain). In the movie, a 15-year-old blind Puerto Rican is killed by an Italian street gang. As the Assistant DA (played by Burt Lancaster) investigates, he discovers that the dead youth was actually the leader of a rival Puerto Rican gang and was acting as a pimp for his sister. She is portrayed as an innocent-looking, plainly-dressed young Latina; but in reality, she is a prostitute (with her mother's knowledge).

Filmed on location in *El Barrio*, the film used actual street gang members recruited by a minister who was running an amateur theater group called "The Centurions." Striving for realism, the film is filled with anti-Puerto Rican slurs. One character states knowingly, "All spics are good with a knife." When Puerto Ricans try to use a swimming pool in East Harlem, they are physically attacked by white teenagers who say "San Juan's polluting the water."

As Burt Lancaster conducts his investigation, the audience is shown Puerto Ricans living crowded together, chickens running wild in the hallways, with young males running their families, even engaging in sex at home, separated only by a makeshift curtain from their parents in the next room—the parents' silence implying their acceptance of this situation.

Sympathy is not built for the dead youth, but rather for one of his attackers. Shelly Winters, his mother, is the only parent portrayed who shows love and a determination to hold her already-battered family together. Although she too is poor, her home appears neat and clean, in stark contrast to the disorganization and dirt in the Puerto Rican homes. Although the film is "liberal" in its analysis of youth crime, citing poverty, ignorance, racial hatred, instability and insecurity as its causes, its visual "message" lays considerable fault on the Puerto Rican family, culture, and community as well.

◗ *West Side Story (1961)*

Perhaps the best known film in which Puerto Rican characters played a central role was *West Side Story*, released six months after *The Young Savages* in 1961. However, the two key Puerto Rican roles, that of María and her brother, Bernardo, were reserved for white performers (Natalie Woods and George Chakiris). This was consistent with the historic Broadway taboo against people of color playing central roles, even if the script called for it. This discriminatory practice has been analyzed extensively in its application to Blacks, Native Americans and Asians.

West Side Story did depict Puerto Ricans in both family and work situations. However, it simultaneously perpetuated the stereotype of Puerto Rican males as knife-carrying gang members who could only solve their problems through violence. It also developed the images of Puerto Rican women as either innocent, passive, virginal beauties (María, the Natalie Wood character), or "hot-blooded," "fiery," spontaneous and worldly (Anita, the Rita Moreno character for which she received an Academy award). This "Madonna/whore" dichotomy had earlier been applied to Mexican women's portrayals. Early films projected one additional stereotype of Latin women; the frivolous Latina whose accent and actions were

meant to be laughed at. One analysis referred to these as "roles that dehumanize Latin American women into silly, sexy performing dolls."

> "The high-voltage Brazilian accent Carmen Miranda personified frivolity. Whether dancing a samba with a bizarre headdress, belting out a hotly rhymed Latin song, or speaking heavily accented lines, Carmen Miranda seldom had the opportunity to escape from frivolity. Her assigned role was to entertain...
>
> "At the opposite end of the spectrum stood Mexican actress Delores del Rio. No frivolity here. Her claim to screen fame was sensuality, a special kind of cool, consistently restrained and ladylike (as that term was used in those days)" (Cortés, 1985).

West Side Story was nominated in 11 categories and won 10 Academy awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Supporting Actor (George Chakiris), Best Supporting Actress (Rita Moreno), Best Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium and Best Costume Design. Choreographer-director Jerome Robbins received for "his brilliant achievements in the art of choreography on film." It was a tremendous box office hit in 1961, surpassed only by Disney's *101 Dalmatians*.

Seen by millions, *West Side Story* built on earlier images and portrayals, and cinematically "established" the definitive image of Puerto Ricans as urban ghetto dwellers, as well as reinforcing and projecting to a wider audience already existing stereotypes.

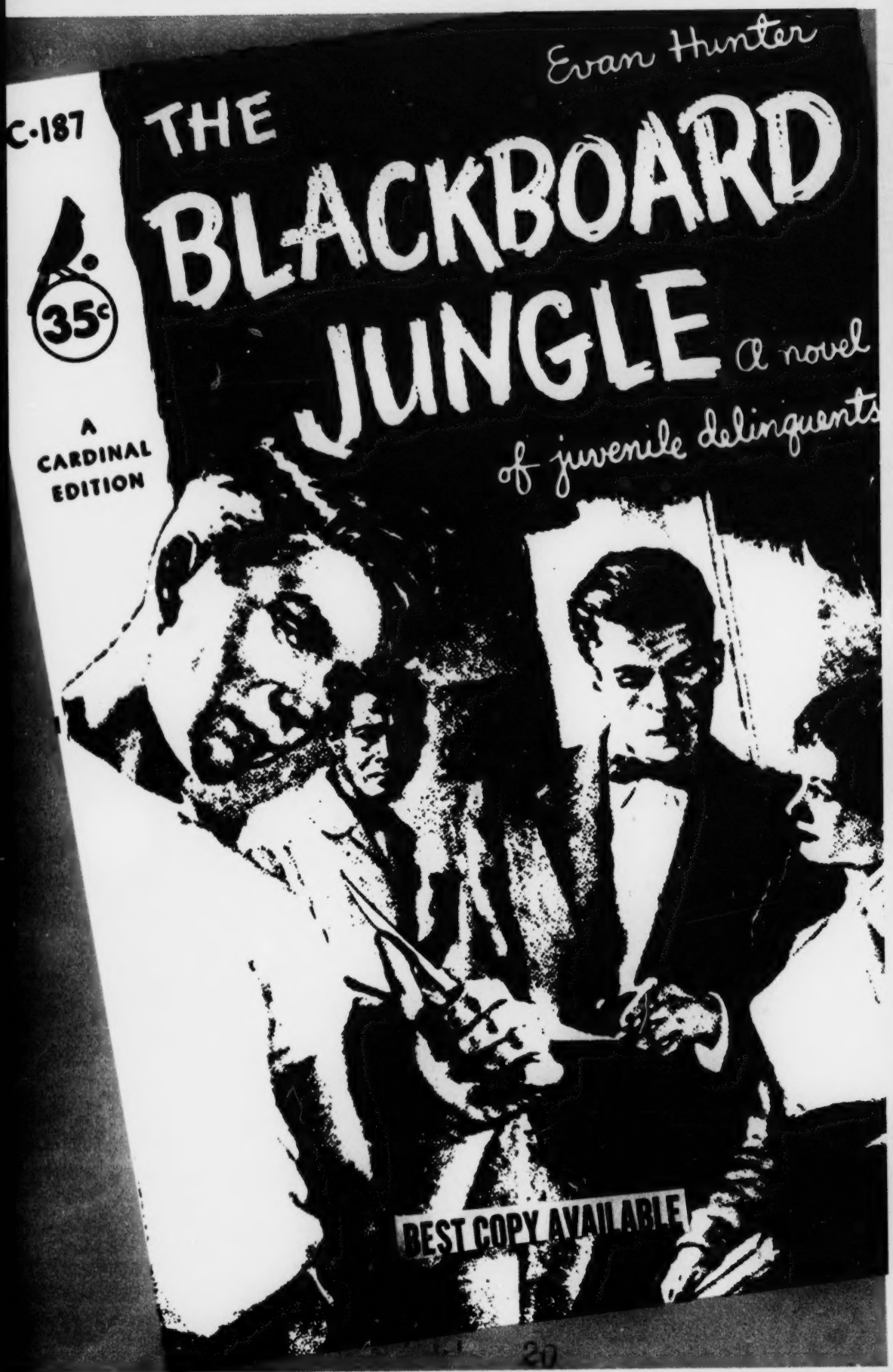
■ *The Liberal Perspective: Urban Missionaries*

The films of the early 1960s that dealt with Puerto Ricans, while limiting us to films dealing with crime and other social "problems," tended to reflect a "liberal" view of crime, delinquency, and poverty. External conditions were recognized, to varying degrees, as being causal factors. This "liberal" view of the causes of juvenile crime was summed up well in two analyses of the 1949 film, *Knock on Any Door*. The movie starred Humphrey Bogart as a liberal lawyer defending a delinquent from Chicago's slums (this was before the word "ghetto"). The young hoodlum, played by John Derek, was charged with killing a policeman. "*Knock on Any Door* (1949) took as [its]...hero the persecuted innocent-at heart whose delinquency and untimely death are preordained by a harsh environment and a vindictive society..."(Clarens, 1980).

At the end of the movie, Humphrey Bogart says, "Nick Romano is guilty...but so are we." Of course, he continues, society could have chosen to eliminate the conditions that caused delinquency and adult crime and then, "This boy could have been exalted instead of jailed." But society ignored the symptoms of its own failures, said the Bogart character, and created hundreds like him through "sheer neglect."

The liberal analysis of crime is based on the premise that the social evils of capitalism can be eliminated without changing the economic base and political structure which, together, routinely generate economic, political and social inequality. The liberal perspective does not include any structural critiques of crime, impoverishment, and the routine workings of "the system." When Puerto Ricans appear in films with this perspective, we are portrayed as delinquents who are social misfits and personally-inadequate victims.

In the mid-1960s, corresponding to America's War on Poverty, this perspective was expressed cinematically in the optimistic "urban missionary" films. In films like *Up the Down Staircase* and *Change of Habit*, white teachers, doctors, nuns, and priests go into the ghetto to "save" us. In each case, the "savior" is initially rejected, often raped, always assaulted, and denigrated, before at least some of us get "saved."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◗ *Up the Down Staircase (1967)*
Released in 1967, this film is described in Halliwell's *Film Guide* as the "problems of a schoolteacher in one of New York's tough sections. Earnest, well acted, not very likeable melodrama." Based on a popular novel by Bel Kaufman, the film opens with the camera watching students streaming past abandonned buildings and garbage-filled lots and alleys to get to "Calvin Coolidge H.S." in New York. The main Puerto Rican character is a student who doesn't talk. Reflecting the liberal perspective of the film, an older teacher comments: "They've been given up on by too many people already."

18 Released the same year the struggle for "community control" began in NYC, the film ignored the growing community movement for control of the schools and instead reflected the optimistic "urban missionary" view that projected well-meaning white professionals doing battle with difficult "inner city problems." As in most of the "urban missionary" films, Puerto Ricans and Blacks served primarily as background characters, embodiments of the "problems," people who did not act in their own behalf, but were acted upon by the central characters who are always white.

At the end of *Up the Down Staircase*, José Rodríguez, the student who didn't talk, finally speaks up—with new authority and self-confidence. The teacher, played by Sandy Dennis, realizes that she has made a difference and decides to stay at Calvin Coolidge High.

◗ *Change of Habit (1969)*
A classic "urban missionary" film, *Change of Habit* starred Elvis Presley, as a doctor running a ghetto clinic, and Mary Tyler Moore as a nun sent into the ghetto to do social work and "save souls." Puerto Ricans have roles as secondary characters: a young, "sexy" teenager who coyly trys to get Presley to examine her chest; adult Puerto Rican males, who sexually harass another nun; and a troubled Puerto Rican teenage boy. "Julio" has a speech impediment and can only speak clearly when he has a knife or other sharp object in his hand. These obvious phallic symnbols make him "feel strong," he says. Mary Tyler Moore befriends him, but he rewards her by eventually trying to rape her. Of course, in the end, Elvis saves the day.

◗ *Popi (1969)*
This comedy depicted life in *El Barrio* and one father's attempt to save his children from being trapped in the slums forever. The solution he decides on is to deny their true nationality and disguise them as Cuban refugees. Alan Arkin (continuing the tradition of non-Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rican leading roles) plays the father and displays genuine love and affection for his children. Their relationship is a positive one; but the idea of denying your identity as the only way to succeed is extremely negative. It is made more so when you consider that the movie came at a time of reawakening and reaffirmation for Puerto Ricans. The movie ends with Arkin and the children unable to go through with the plan and returning to the ghetto. For all their efforts, nothing has changed.

One reviewer described *Popi* as the "adventures of a cheerful inhabitant of New York's Puerto Rican ghetto. Ethnic comedy-drama of the kind that has since found its way in abundance into American TV series. Very competently done for those who like it, e.g. Puerto Ricans."

These films operated in a liberal social context, during the days of the Great Society and the "War on Poverty," a time when people believed problems just needed to be identified and exposed, and could finally be corrected by governmental action. "Urban missionary" films could only be made in a society where a sizeable portion of the population believed that social problems could be managed, without addressing the roots of the problems.

During this period, crime movies also tended to reflect the liberal

perspective. Cops in films such as *Madigan* (1968) and *Bullit* (1968) were considered to be tough but "humane." One analysis classified them as "cops of the Kennedy era," and said these films generally projected the reassuring message that "decent" folks could restore order and make things work again.

These films continued in the liberal tradition, drawing on "environmental" theories, but more and more began to introduce a cinematic counterpart to the "blaming the victim" theories popularized by Oscar Lewis in *La Vida* and other social scientists (Lewis, 1966). More attention was given to personality theories which gave primacy to individual personality "defects."

◗ *The Pawnbroker (1965)*

Rod Steiger was nominated for an Academy Award for his role as a Jewish Holocaust survivor who runs a pawnshop in *El Barrio*. In the movie, he is terrorized by Black hoodlums. His Puerto Rican assistant, "Jesús Ortiz" (played by Jaime Sánchez), is a poor, but optimistic worker who dreams of "making it." Haunted and hardened by memories of the concentration camps and unable to express his humanity or to appreciate the humanity of others, Steiger constantly belittles the naivete of his assistant. The Sánchez character, is projected as the classic poor, ineffective, Puerto Rican "loser."

Angered by Steiger's constant paternalism and cynical put-downs, and goaded on by his African-American girlfriend (a "hooker"), the Sánchez character teams up with a nasty Black hoodlum (played by Brock Peters) to rip off Steiger. During the robbery, however, Sánchez dies while shielding Steiger from a bullet.

This film, shot on location in East Harlem, was not overtly political, but hinted at the growing tensions between whites, Blacks, and Puerto Ricans in NYC. Its director, Sidney Lumet (*Twelve Angry Men*–1957, *Serpico*–1973, *Dog Day Afternoon*–1975, *Prince of the City*–1981, and more recently, *Q & A*), put together a powerful drama with the liberal perspective that "we are all victims" of urban corruption and racism, a theme he has addressed in other films. However, the Puerto Rican and Black "victims" in the film were clearly subordinated to the white protagonist—even in victimization, the film projected a racial hierarchy.

The film's impact was arguably increased by the historical events which surrounded it and the impact of these events on the national consciousness. The year before, in 1964, massive voter registration drives and civil rights activity in the South led to more than 1,000 arrests, 37 Black churches bombed or damaged, and 15 people murdered (including Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney). In New York itself, there were massive school boycotts, with 1/2 million Black and Puerto Rican children staying home in support of a civil rights boycott led by Rev. Milton Galamison.

That same year saw the first citywide civil rights demonstration sponsored by the Puerto Rican community when 1,800 protestors marched across the Brooklyn Bridge in March 1964. This year also signalled the beginning of the "long hot summers" with an uprising in Harlem after a white policeman shot a Black teenager.

The year The *Pawnbroker* hit the movie screens, Americans also saw television screens project images of the Selma civil rights march, urban rebellions in Watts, San Diego, and Chicago (where Puerto Ricans fought police). In NYC, racial polarization intensified with a struggle over low-income housing pitting the Jewish and Italian communities of Forest Hills, Corona, and Howard Beach against a growing civil rights movement. That confrontation became known as the "scatter-site housing controversy."

◗ *The Possession of Joel Delaney (1972)*

In the early 1970s, building on the popular fascination with demonic possession spurred by the release of *The Exorcist* (the book), a number of movies provided cinematic variations

on this theme: *Blacula* (1972), *The Possession of Joel Delaney* (1972); and *The Exorcist* (1973). In *The Possession of Joel Delaney*, we are offered a Hollywood vision of what would happen if a Puerto Rican "voodoo demon" possessed the mind and body of young, wealthy, white, Joel Delaney (played by Perry King). The movie revolves around Delaney's sister's (Shirley McLaine) attempt to find out what has happened to him. In addition to cutting off people's heads and putting them on the shelves with the sugar and spices, the "possessed" Joel Delaney, tortures his rich sister and her kids. He forces them to strip and dance naked, to eat raw fish and dog food, and to play dominoes with him at knifepoint. Perry King's terrible Spanish accent and his comical conjugating of verbs in Spanish are overshadowed only by the realization that the film really expressed the stereotypes and fears of those who made it.

■ *A Hardening of the Image: From Assimilation to Annihilation*

By the late 60s, the portrayal of both cops and criminals changed, reflecting America's disillusionment with the "failure" of the "War on Poverty," and a growing fear of ghetto militancy and youth protest. "In the movies of the seventies, the policeman was very much his own man—judge, jury and executioner—and he lost all allegiance to the law. The criminal too, lost human definition and became a mere target. Society lost its authority and was usually portrayed as an ineffectual, often corrupt entity" (Clarens, 1980).

This was the era of Richard Nixon, what one Puerto Rican social commentator, borrowing from poet-musician Gil Scott-Heron, labeled "Winter in America." It was a time of "law and order," the "white backlash," Vietnam, "dirty tricks" against political rivals, increased infiltration and police repression against opponents of the government, especially militant groups and their leaders, and the official burial of the "War on Poverty."

A new variation on the cops and criminals theme emerged. It has been called variously, the urban western, the street western, the urban action drama, and the violent urban thriller. These movies took the mythic cowboy hero and moved him from the wide-open spaces of the West into the crime-ridden dirty, and dangerous streets of urban America. They focused on crime in the inner cities and offered visual and spoken statements about crime, the kind of people who commit crime, and solutions to this very contemporary problem.

Beginning in 1970, police were more openly being portrayed by Hollywood as the "thin blue line," standing between society and the savages that would destroy it. One film called them *The New Centurions*, drawing a comparison with the elite force that guarded imperial Rome's gates against the "barbarians" of that age. Films in this category included *Dirty Harry* and *The French Connection* (1971), *The New Centurions* (1972), *The Seven-Ups* and *Badge 373* (1973), *Magnum Force* and *Death Wish* (1974).

In all of these films that are set in New York, Puerto Ricans are included among the criminal villains. If as Carlos Clarens argues, "Crime films should be seen as indicators of America's changing attitude toward crime," they must also be seen as indicators of a changing attitude towards those portrayed as criminals.

As the Nixon and post-Nixon eras progressed, cinematic attitudes towards Puerto Ricans shifted away from the optimistic assimilationist view that held out the possibility of the Puerto Rican "inferior" eventually being "civilized." *Badge 373*, released in 1973, marked the beginning of this shift, and simultaneously signalled the beginning of modern Puerto Rican protest against media stereotyping. According to its distributors, Paramount Pictures, *Badge 373* was based on the "real-life" career of a former New York detective, Eddie Egan (as was *The French Connection*). In the movie, Egan is played by Robert Duvall, and Eagan himself plays a

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Screenplay by EDWARD ANHALT and J. P. MILLER / Executive Producer HAROLD HECHT / Produced by PAT DUGGAN
Directed by JOHN FRANKENHEIMER / A Contemporary Productions Inc. Picture / Released thru UNITED ARTISTS

minor part. The plot involves a tough police detective trying to avenge the death of his partner at the hands of heroin dealers who are in alliance with Puerto Rican "radicals."

The movie's Puerto Ricans, a vicious low-life crew, murder, peddle heroin, and prostitute their sisters (a theme first presented 14 years earlier in *The Young Savages*) in order to buy guns for a revolution in Puerto Rico. The detective is under suspension after the death of a suspect he is chasing; but as the movie progresses, the need for extra-legal violence by the police is validated by the portrayal of the inhuman Puerto Rican criminals.

The *New York Times* review of the
22 movie said:

> "All of the evil is perpetrated by Puerto Ricans, either innocent but violent revolutionaries who run around shouting '*Puerto Rico Libre*,' or uninnocent, but violent non-revolutionaries who manipulate them. Against such forces, Eddie, the hard-nosed cop has only the instincts of his personal bigotry to guide him. And invariably the instincts of his personal bigotry turns out to be right. There is absolutely nothing to praise in *Badge 373*.... At some level, the screenplay means to make use of racial prejudices, expressing them, but not endorsing them, and enjoying a free ride through current anxieties that ought to be worth something at the box office" (Greenspun, 1973).

Controversy over this film was fueled by the fact that its screenplay had been written by Pete Hamill, at that time a well-known liberal journalist who had frequently written sympathetically about the Puerto Rican community. In addition, one of its characters, the leader of the Puerto Rican radicals, was played by Felipe Luciano, the former chairperson of the Young Lords revolutionary organization—in his pre-Hollywood days. Indeed, the radicals in the film were obviously modeled after the Young Lords and similar groups, even adopting their identifying "uniforms" of berets and field jackets for authenticity. *Badge 373* thus added to already-existing Puerto Rican media stereotypes the image of the discontented, misguided and ultimately ineffective "revolutionary."

Badge 373 criminalized the Puerto Rican independence movement. It made it appear that no law-abiding, rational Puerto Rican supported independence for Puerto Rico, only a small criminal fringe element. Interestingly, during this period, the issue of Puerto Rican independence was winning worldwide support. The same year *Badge 373* was released, the United Nations Committee on Decolonization introduced a resolution that was approved by a majority of the nations in the General Assembly, affirming "the inalienable right to independence and self-determination for the Puerto Rican people."

Two weeks after *Badge 373* opened, a demonstration was held at the home of Paramount's parent corporation, Gulf and Western. The Puerto Rican Action Coalition condemned *Badge 373* as racist because it "denigrated the Puerto Rican community" and "vividly expresses the lack of respect for the dignity of the Puerto Rican people." The protestors demanded that the movie be withdrawn from circulation and that representatives of the Puerto Rican community be allowed to review future film scripts that concerned Puerto Ricans. Paramount president, Frank Yablans, rejected the protestors' demands. However, after a series of militant demonstrations at theaters, and after a small bomb exploded in one of the theaters showing the movie, *Badge 373* was quietly withdrawn from New York. However, it has since been "recycled" as a much edited tv movie and a rental video tape.

This militant community response to anti-Puerto Rican stereotyping seems to have temporarily stopped other exploitation-minded producers,

much as the anti-*Fort Apache, the Bronx* protests forced anti-Puerto Rican images off the screens for a few years in the early 1980s. However, six years after *Badge 373*, in 1979, *Boardwalk* focused on the victimization of an elderly Jewish couple (Lee Strasberg and Ruth Gordon) at the hands of a Puerto Rican youth gang in Coney Island. The movie ends with Strasberg strangling one of his young Puerto Rican tormentors to death in the Coney Island surf. A *Village Voice* review of *Boardwalk* said:

> "These kids are presented as cardboard characters who rape and steal and burglarize and vandalize synagogues just because that is what they do. They have no unemployed parents, they have no rotting homes, they have no poverty, they have no failures in school, they are not turned away from jobs they seek, they have no self-esteem dragging in the gutter and they are not called spics. They are just mad dogs, hauled on the screen when the script calls for a dramatic representation of the disintegration of the neighborhood or to set up the improbable denouement, which I can't figure out why an intelligent, sensitive man like Strasberg would agree to play in the first place.
>
> "But you see, the Puerto Ricans are just getting organized. They do not yet have the loud voices that are available to the blacks. So the producers let the blacks slide, this time, and stick it to the Spics, who after all can stand as a metaphor for anyone who is not white. It is slippery, vicious racism. It is somebody's racist fantasy right up there on the screen in technicolor. This movie is rotten at its core.
>
> "And it stinks" (Wilkins, 1979).

However, another *Village Voice* reviewer had a different reaction to *Boardwalk* and found the charge of racism "somewhat simplistic." Andrew Sarris, comfortable with the image of Puerto Ricans as the "oppressors" of Jewish people said:

> "For the first time in my memory, a thoughtful Jewish character has not bothered to try to 'understand' his oppressor, or to reason with him. The only answer to force is counterforce, the only remedy for the evildoer is execution. An eye for an eye. The archetypical survivors do not intend to become the archetypical victims once more. This is the ultimate 'message' of *Boardwalk*, and it is not the first time that a very bad movie has brought us very significant news" (Sarris, 1979).

This urban revenge theme was repeated in the 1980 film, *The Exterminator*, in which a Vietnam veteran goes after a Puerto Rican gang that mugged and left his friend paralyzed for life. The "exterminator," played by Robert Ginty, utilized hollow-point bullets filled with mercury, an industrial meat grinder, a machine gun, and an acetylene torch to dispatch the Puerto Ricans and other "urban vermin." Once again, the Puerto Rican characters were cardboard symbols; they had no personalities. They were not people as we know human beings to be; they were really the embodiment of evil and seemed to have no purpose in life except to maim, kill and destroy.

◗ *Fort Apache, the Bronx: The Producers, the Stars, and the "American Renewal"*

Badge 373, *Boardwalk*, and *The Exterminator* were the immediate predecessors of *Fort Apache, the Bronx*. On March 1, 1980, filming for the movie *Fort Apache, the Bronx* began in the South Bronx. The movie was financed by Time-Life Films, a division of Time Inc. Time Inc. is a major media conglomerate. In 1980, it ranked 137th in *Fortune*'s "500 Largest Industrial Corporations." It was the leader in the category of "Publishing, Printing Industry." It owns *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*,

Sports Illustrated, *People* and *Money*; Time-Life Books, Records, and Films, Little-Brown and Co.; the Book-of-the-Month Club; Time-Life Television, Video and Multimedia; Home Box Office; Manhattan Cable TV; and Talent Associates, Ltd. Recently, it acquired Warner Brothers and is now known as Time-Warner.

Simultaneous with the release of *Fort Apache, the Bronx* in 1981, Time Inc. made publishing history by announcing that each of its magazines would simultaneously feature articles written around a single theme, "American Renewal." The messages of this "Special Project" would reach 68 million readers. The perspective of this historic single-theme series was outlined in its ads. America was suffering from a lack of national self-confidence and sense of purpose. Americans were becoming overwhelmed by the problems they see facing the nation at home and abroad. To combat defeatist notions, Time, Inc. was going to run a series "to dispel the notion that nothing can be done about the crisis..." and to show that Americans united can solve any problem.

Fortune's contribution to the "American Renewal" series included a discussion of "The Right Way to Strive for Equality." The magazine argued that while all Americans oppose bigotry, the civil rights movement of the past had gone too far, had become too expensive, and its supporters had become too militant. It referred to affirmative action as a "numbers game of quotas." It described the inner city ghettos as "a running sore" that is an "affront to American ideals," drawing upon negative images of disease and social pathology. Bilingual education was identified as a barrier to progress and upward mobility. Finally, the article concluded that, in economic terms, discrimination was no longer of major significance, implying that the widening economic gap between whites and people of color is not rooted in institutional or individual discrimination, or structural causes. This perspective, in effect attributes the deficiencies of people of color as an alternative "explanation."

The entire series very closely mirrored the views of the Reagan administration. And many of these same views and opinions were expressed in the movie *Fort Apache, the Bronx*, where the ghetto was very vividly depicted as a "running sore." This is not to reduce the film to simply an exercise in propaganda, but rather to identify the ideological perspective of those that financed and produced it. The film was intended to make money, and in fact was part of a much larger Time Inc. plan. It was part of a three-film package that marked Time-Life Film's entrance into the film production business and was linked to their plan to produce movies that could be recycled later through "pay-tv, cable, network, public broadcasting, and station syndication on a somewhat sequential basis."

The movie's executive producer was David Susskind, a well-known film producer and talk-show host with a liberal reputation. By 1980, like many other American liberals, Susskind had come to embrace many views identified only with conservatives. He told *Daily News* gossip columnist, Liz Smith, he would vote for Ronald Reagan because he was disgusted with both the domestic and foreign policy of the Democrats. The movie's producer in the streets was Daniel Petrie, whose past credits included the widely-acclaimed movie version of *A Raisin in the Sun*, Lorraine Hansberry's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about a Black family made in 1961, which Susskind produced.

The stars of the movie were Paul Newman, a screen "heart-throb," long associated with social causes; and Ed Asner, television's prize-winning "Lou Grant," an actor whose name was almost synonymous with progressive causes.

■ *Why Films Are Important to a Civil and Human Rights Movement*

Commercial movies are complex

productions. They are designed for a mass audience in order to make money. They are influenced by box-office reports, analysis of popular trends, developments in other popular arts (i.e., music video), and the analysis of movie workers in the "moods, values, tastes, and concerns of their surrounding society" (Sklar, 1975). In order to make their product as attractive as possible, producers and financiers try to gauge what the public wants, what the public will believe, and what the public will pay to see. This is why many media analysts view films as historical documents which can often illuminate the social attitudes and trends of a given time period.

It is important for us to keep in mind also that the technology of film-making and film exhibition often overshadows the content of the film. People are more amenable to turning off their critical skills when the lights go off and the movie rolls. Films are especially suited to a non-literal generation, people who don't read, and young people raised in a media environment of short, fast images without interconnected plots or analysis.

Finally, we have to take note of the fact that films are produced today with conscious plans to "recycle" and reincarnate them in other forms. For example, prior to the release of *Fort Apache, the Bronx*, a paperback "novelization" of the screenplay was published. After its release in the theaters, television rights were sold to NBC, cable rights were sold to HBO (also owned by Time Inc., whose subsidiary Time-Life Films produced the movie), and the film was distributed overseas. Finally, the movie was released as a videocassette available for sales and rentals. This "recycling" is made easier by the increasing trend towards concentration and monopoly in the mass media, by the emergence of giant media conglomerates that have the interlocking means to recycle media messages over and over again.

Given these developments in the mass media, today negative stereotypes are given "eternal life" and are distributed internationally. This takes on added significance when we consider that many studies argue that when people have no direct contact, most of their learning about other ethnic groups comes from the mass media.

The widely hailed 1968 report by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission) is remembered today primarily for its stark appraisal of race relations following the 1960s urban rebellions:

> "This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving towards two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal...What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it and white society condones it."

The Kerner Commission analyzed the mass media from the perspective that people form their opinions about race "from the multiplicity of sources that condition the public's thinking on all events." The Commission concluded that the communications media was one of the main sources of information and ideas about race relations and contributed to the totality of attitudes held by Americans on racial and other issues.

The fight against media racism is part of the overall struggle to change our conditions. It is an influential arena in which we can struggle against the promoting of white superiority and its corollary, the inferiority of people of color. This struggle can be used to attain concrete immediate gains such as the elimination or repudiation of racist stereotypes and increased employment and financial support for independent filmmakers. It can also contribute to the ongoing goal of community empowerment and the development of a collective political consciousness, organizational capability, and an effective, accountable leadership.

Today we have the responsibility to continue the struggle. Our actions in this area will be a further advancement in the direction taken by the concerned Puerto Ricans who challenged *Badge 373* in 1973 and *Fort Apache, the Bronx* in 1980. The following statement by the Committee Against Fort Apache (CAFA) provides some relevant examples of the importance of the struggle against media racism to our people's advancement:

"CAFA recognized that it was fighting not only the giant media conglomerates which financed and distributed *Fort Apache*, but also the growing right-wing sentiment in America. We were demanding respect and reaffirming the strength and beauty of our history and culture— at a time when our past gains were being eroded and we were increasingly being used as scapegoats for the nation's economic and social failures, and when many American liberals were embracing the 'solutions' of the reactionary Right. Recognizing this reality, our goals were primarily educational and organizational: to educate our community about the effects of media stereotyping and show its links to the overall situation we face .

"The secondary focus of the boycott organized by CAFA was economic. While we realized that we did not yet have a movement that could shut this movie down nationwide, we could have some impact at the box office. *Fort Apache* made $13 million in domestic rentals, but *Variety* reported that even this was 'way below expectations for the costly, controversial picture.' After this, and the failure of their other two films, Time-Life Films went out of the movie business.

"The organizing against *Fort Apache* also contributed to the unity of Latin, Black, Asian, and white activists for social change. In addition, it helped us identify many progressive media activists, as well as people inside the establishment media, and formed important bonds of unity for future struggle. Finally this struggle helped deepen our community's understanding of the media and showed how we can deal with it effectively. It was a fighting movement which engaged the enemy on a number of fronts, added to the historical legacy of past battles, and advanced the starting point for the next struggles against media racism and for freedom (Pérez, 1985)." ❑

ENDNOTES

1 Quoted in the Verbatim Record of the 1047th Meeting, Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 9/2/76, United Nations A/AC.109/PV.1047, p. 51.

2 *Naked City* was a 1948 detective thriller that was considered a highly influential trend-setter because of the gritty realistic feel it achieved with on-location filming. Prior to this, movies were usually shot on studio sets.)

3 Cristal, an Argentinean whose real name was Victoria Moya, began playing leads in Mexican films when she was 16.

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From the Margin to the Center:
Puerto Rican Cinema in New York

Lillian Jiménez

Without a doubt, in order to stand on our own two feet Puerto Ricans of all generations must begin by affirming our own history. It is as if we are saying—we have roots, therefore we are!"

Bernardo Vega[1]

For many Puerto Rican film and video makers, picking up the camera was equivalent to "picking up the gun" in defense of civil and human rights in the United States after the Civil Rights Movement. The beginning of this "coming to self" as Bell Hooks describes it, was the desire to expose the terrible conditions under which Puerto Ricans of this generation had been raised; challenge the assumptions under which these conditions thrived; and recreate the institutions and society that had engendered them. In this war, images were a potent weapon. Through popular culture, distorted images of spitfires and Latin lovers (oversexed and irresponsible Latinos), brutish farm workers (substandard intelligence), *bandidos* (untrustworthy), petty tyrants, welfare recipients or drug addicts (undisciplined children) had burned their place into the collective consciousness of Puerto Ricans and the broader society. In effect, the dominant ideology and its cultural machinery indicted Puerto Ricans as responsible for their own conditions. It followed that American benevolence, through its institutions, was necessary to protect them from themselves. In the late 60s and early 70s, a new generation of Puerto Ricans responded to these assumptions with, "*Fuego, fuego, fuego, los yankis quieren fuego*" (Fire, fire, fire, the yankees want fire). As Iris Morales, a Young Lord in the documentary film produced by Newsreel in the early 70s, *El Pueblo Se Levanta*, says, "I always thought it was my parent's fault; that my parents were the ones who had made this oppression; that they had made everything so dirty...but then I started thinking..."[2] Puerto Ricans took up the struggle to discover their history and to expose, challenge and change their reality, and images were key in this life and death struggle.

■ *Antecedents*

While it has not been widely known, the first Puerto Rican migrants to the U.S. during and after WWI, were deeply concerned with their depiction in the media. By creating a wide network of civic, cultural and political organizations, these *pioneros* organized against all forms of discrimination including the media. In 1940, *Scribner's Commentator* ran an article entitled

LILLIAN JIMENEZ was a student and community organizer during the early 70s. She has been active in the field of independent film and video for the past 15 years and is currently a program officer at the Paul Robeson Fund for Film and Video of the Funding Exchange. In addition, she is the director of the National Latino Film and Video Festival at El Museo del Barrio, which she initiated in 1981. She lives in New York with her son Yuis.

■ Edin Veléz's videotape *A Dance of Darkness*
Photograph Ethel Vélez

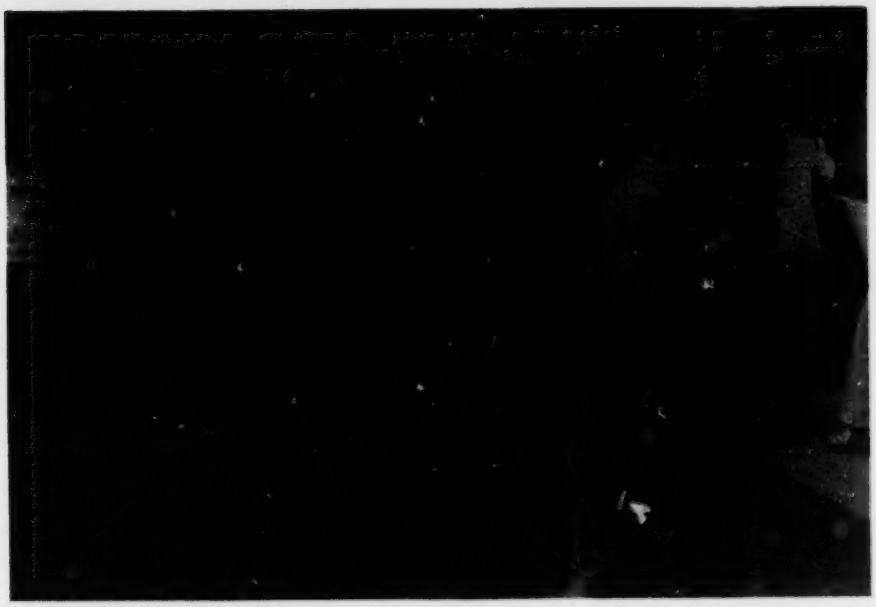
"Welcome Paupers and Crime: Puerto Rico's Shocking Gift to the U.S.," which said "...all Puerto Ricans were totally lacking in moral values, which is why none of them seemed to mind wallowing in the most abject moral degradation." Though met with rebuttals and mass meetings from 40 Puerto Rican organizations, including the Asociación de Escritores y Periodistas Puertorriqueños, this article was followed in 1947, by a series of equally vitriolic articles in the *World Telegram*. This too was met with an equally vociferous demonstration and picket line that stretched for several blocks.[3]

While thousands of Puerto Ricans had migrated to the United States prior to World War II, it is not until the advent of the intensive industrialization of Puerto Rico through the Operation Bootstrap policies (late 40s–mid 50s) that hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States in search of economic possibilities. Settling in large metropolitan areas on the East Coast like New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, they occupied low income housing readily available as Irish, Jewish and Italian immigrants moved up the economic ladder and away to the outer boroughs and suburbs. Unlike other immigrants, however, Puerto Ricans arrived in the United States as citizens and anticipated benefits from that legal status. Racially mixed, they were more tolerant of behavior and relationships deemed inappropriate in race conscious United States. Confronted by abject discrimination in spite of their citizenship and because of their racial mixture, they developed a survival strategy relying on the existing infrastructure of home town clubs, civic associations and political clubs. To achieve educational and political objectives, they created new organizations like the Puerto Rican Forum and Aspira of New York.

While these first generations of migrants paved the way through internal and external forms of resistance, their strategies were varied and fraught with contradictions. Years of ideological and political domination by Spain and then the United States had instilled the culture with political ambivalence. Some quickly seized the opportunity to remake themselves in the model of the assimilated citizen.

■ *A New Generation*

The third generation of Puerto Ricans who reached their late teens during the



Máximo R. Colón

volatile and empowering Civil Rights Movement, affirmed their cultural and political identity with the emergence of new community and political organizations in New York. Raised on television, propelled by ideas of empowerment and an unremitting rage against a social order that denied their existence, they repudiated the "complacent" and "accommodationist" strategies employed by mainstream Puerto Rican political leaders of the day. Having been educated in American schools, many had served as intermediaries for their family with educational, health and social service agencies. Having weathered the full fury of institutional racism, accommodation as such was the last strategy they wished to employ. Asserting their presence in militant and forceful terms, theirs was the strategy of direct confrontation. The Young Lords, The Puerto Rican Student Union, The Movimiento Pro Independencia (the precursor of The Puerto Rican Socialist Party), El Comité M.I.N.P., Resistencia Puertorriqueña and El Pueblo del Vladic m the Lower East Side, just to name a few, were engaged in re-creating the Puerto Rican community using as role models Puerto Rican labor figures like Luisa Capetillo and Juana Colón; Nationalist leaders like Don Pedro Albizu Campos and Lolita Lebrón; and international leaders like Che Guevara. Involved in local, national and international issues, they galvanized the Puerto Rican community by traveling to socialist countries, taking up the issue of Puerto Rican independence, creating support committees for Nationalist leaders imprisoned since the early 50s and worked closely with other similar groups within the Black, Asian and white communities. This generation picked up the camera in spite of and in defense of the ones they loved.

An integral component of this political ferment and awakening, was cultural revitalization based on nationalism. As "cultural workers," artists of all disciplines collaborated to create new images of Puerto Ricans through the visual arts with the development of organizations such asTaller Boricua and through the poetry of figures such as Pedro Pietri and Sandra María Estévez. A distinct Puerto Rican identity, tied to the Island, rooted in the New York experience and shaped by the anti-imperialist ideology of the period, had emerged. Film and video images created by Puerto Ricans that represented

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Interview

José García Torres & Realidades

I started as a Fine Arts major at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, which was then one of the finest art schools in the United States. My ambition at the time was to be a sculptor. I was working with Theodore Rossac, one of the first sculptors to weld metal, even before Picasso. I was completely fascinated by him, but I also neglected my studies. So when finally I had to present my thesis, I really didn't have much time to give to it. I had a 16mm camera and projector that my cousin in *El Barrio* had given me to see if I could pawn it for him. (I guess I was more of a clean cut guy). But I never really pawned it because he died two days after giving it to me from a heroin overdose. I had kept the camera in memory of him because he was really a very brilliant guy. Unfortunately, he had fallen like many of our brothers and sisters into the treachery of drugs in *El Barrio*. So when it came to writing the thesis, I took the camera and tried to answer visually, instead of verbally, the differences between Art Nouveau and Bauhaus. My professor thought it was great and I got on the honor roll. After that I started filming everything instead of writing about it.

And then one of the instructors who was the director of Design and Research of a textile firm, asked me if I would do an industrial film about textiles over the summer. I decided to do it, especially after they offered me what I thought was a great deal of money. He also said that he would give me complete artistic freedom. I

the history, culture and daily reality of the majority of Puerto Ricans were missing.

■ *Realidades*

In 1972 *Realidades*, a local television series on WNET/Channel 13, was created through community pressure. It provided the focus and center for Puerto Rican involvement in the broadcast industry and later in the independent film and video field. Community activists Gilberto Gerena Valentín, Esperanza Martell, Diana Caballero, Julio Rodríguez and others formed The Puerto Rican Education and Action Media Council in 1972 to protest negative depictions of Puerto Ricans and advocate for increased employment of Puerto Ricans within the industry. Joined by pioneer filmmaker José García, they successfully pressured WNET, by taking over the studio during an evening pledge, to establish *Realidades* with discretionary station money. Humberto Cintrón, a community activist became Executive Producer. José García, who had established several community film workshops throughout the country for the National Endowment for the Arts became Executive Producer. Retaining its local focus for two years, several important cultural and public affairs documentaries were produced and acquired, including *Angelitos Negros*, an in-studio dance piece about a *baquiné*, the African-based burial ritual of a young child; *Towards A Collective Expression*, the first documentary by Marcos Dimas about the philosophy and work of Taller Boricua, the visual arts group he co-founded; and *Los Nacionalistas*, a documentary that recaptured the history of Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico. The need to fill a national void of programming for Latinos was met when *Realidades* became a national show and developed programming exchanges with KMEX, a local public broadcast station in Los Angeles. Chicano filmmaker Jesus Treviño's seminal *Yo Soy Chicano* (1972), about the political consciousness of the Chicano movement, was the first film exchange, opening a dialogue between Puerto Ricans and Chicanos. Contact was made with Sandino Films, a collective of filmmakers in Puerto Rico and *Julia De Burgos*, a film about the life and death

thought it was a great opportunity. A friend of mine, a brilliant jazz musician by the name of Tony Scott did the score for me. I did some very interesting shots, close ups, slow motions, linear perspectives, threads would weave and the colors danced, it was like a linear ballet. The director of Design and Research thought it was a great film, but he said that they couldn't use the film for sales because the boys down South won't understand it. So I really felt that my first attempt at filmmaking had been a failure. I felt really let down after that.

Later on I saw an ad in the *New York Times* for an industrial documentary filmmaker. I brought the film as a sample. After he saw the film the person who was interviewing me said, "Are you trying to fool me? You didn't make this film." I said, "What do you mean? Of course, I made this film." He told me that he had seen the film in the New York Film Festival, and that it had won the award as best industrial film of the year. I was so happy, I didn't care that I'd been exploited. I asked him if I could have the job if I could prove that I had made the film. I called the firm in front of him and spoke with the guy. I wasn't even really angry at him. I just asked him to explain to the guy that I had made the film, which he did.

After that I worked at Starlight Productions on documentary and industrial films doing everything from filming, photography, and editing to directing. It was a low-budget operation, but it gave me the opportunity to do my own work. I did films about *El Barrio*, where I had grown up, and about the South Bronx. I did a film called *A Day in a Life*, which I brought to WNET/Channel 13 around the 60s. WNET

of the revolutionary poet, by José García was the outcome. This dialogue and working relationship with Chicano directors in the West and Southwest were instrumental in the formation of the National Latino Media Coalition, which legally challenged the industry nationally. In 1974, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting funded *Realidades* as a national series and Lou De Lemos, a Dominican with experience in commercial media, took over as Series Producer.

During this period, *Realidades* served as one of the principle creative magnets within the Puerto Rican community, attracting artists from different disciplines to collaborate and brainstorm on a myriad of projects. Writers, visual artists, poets and film and video makers like Diego Echevarria, working at Channel 13 on another show and Diego De La Texera, cofounder of Sandino Films in Puerto Rico, gravitated to the series as a creative wellspring. However, a precarious funding base, uneven programming schedule and internal problems caused the *Realidades* series to end in 1975. Initiated by a core group of activists and makers with varying levels of skill and experience given the exclusionary practices of the media industry, *Realidades* launched the careers of many producers, many of whom are still working within the broadcast, advertising and independent film industries: Raquel Ortiz, currently Executive Producer of Cultural Programming at WGBH, Boston; Larry Varas, CBS in NY; Livia Pérez, independent producer; Felipe Borerro, sound recordist; Eulogio Ortiz, Assistant Director with McNeil-Lehrer, WNET, NY; Mercedes Sabio, Program Manager, WOSU, Athens, Ohio and Lou De Lemos, Children's Television Workshop, New York.

As a consequence of the *Realidades* series and the advocacy and litigation waged by the National Coalition against the stations, José Rivera, the National Coalition's attorney, was the first and only Puerto Rican named to the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in the late 1970s. In addition, several Latino public affairs shows were spawned at commercial stations—many of which are still in place today like NBC's *Visiones* and ABC's *Imágenes Latinas*.

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was doing a documentary based on Piri Thomas' book *Down these Mean Streets* at the time. I showed them *A Day in A Life* and *A Long Summer Day*, another documentary I had made about a summer program in the projects. When Dick McCuchen, who was in charge of Public Affairs, saw the film, he asked me how I had gotten that footage. He said that he had been working on a film for months and all these Anglo cameramen had brought back were traveling shots from inside a car! He asked me when could I start working and I said right away. He said, "I know it's not enough money, but we can only afford $150. I know you're probably used to making much more." I told him I was making a lot more at my present job. He said that all he could pay was $150 a day. I thought he meant $150 a week! I didn't want to say anything except that I could start the next day. So I went out and got together a Puerto Rican crew, including Eddie Ramírez, who is a fine soundman now, and Juan Rodríguez, who is also a soundman. The film won several awards, including the Peabody award for "Distinguished Journalism in Public Service." Dick McCuchen got the Peabody award as the producer. But he was really grateful to us, and as a bonus he contracted me to do his next film on prisons in the U.S. At the same time I was able to start a film workshop without any funds using the equipment that was available to me. I got other people from WNET to come in and give classes, which turned out to be the beginning of the NET Film Workshop.

Out of that experience came *Realidades*. Jay Islin who was at WNET offered me the possibility of putting together a pilot project directed toward the Puerto Rican

■ *The Documentarians: The Media Guerillas*

Many film and video makers chose to remain independent of the corporate media structures. The earliest wave of Puerto Rican filmmaking concentrated in the documentary format because of its relative low cost, accessibility and efficacy in representing the conditions under which the majority of Puerto Ricans lived. Newsreel, an alternative media organization patterned after the Film and Photo League of the 30s, espoused the theory that anyone could "pick up the camera and shoot" to create films that empowered people. Generally influenced by the democratic underpinnings of the media movement, a small cadre of Puerto Rican documentarians slowly evolved. Profiles of three Puerto Rican documentarians illustrate the motivation and problems faced by these independent producers.

Carlos De Jesús started out as a photographer until German television asked him to direct a film on housing in New York. This collaboration spawned his first film, *The Devil is a Condition* (1972), a celebration of Latinos and Blacks fighting to improve their housing conditions throughout the city. Made with a cache of liberated film, a borrowed camera, editing facilities and lab processing provided by German television, and an otherwise no-money budget, it was presented at the Whitney Museum and garnered awards at festivals in Paris. Lacking personal resources and requiring an institutional base, he helped found *Imágenes* at New Jersey Public Television and went on to make *The Picnic* (1976), a celebration and sharing of cultural values between Puerto Rican inmates and their families in a New Jersey prison. He continued to work in Latino series within public broadcasting throughout the country because the infrastructure for independent film was in its nascent stage. He currently teaches at NYU and City College in New York, continues to work in photography and video because of difficulty obtaining funds for film projects.

Beinvenida Matías received formal training in film production at La Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía in Madrid, Spain. On her return to the United States, she worked at Young Filmakers Foundation, a film resource center in the Lower East Side that

community in New York. I put together the concept of *Realidades*, a magazine-type program of documentaries that dealt specifically with the Hispanic-Puerto Rican situation in New York. As a symbol to the migration, I thought of filming a Puerto Rican classic, *La Carreta* (*The Oxcart*), that Miriam Colón had premiered in New York with the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. I had always been impressed by that play. I thought that presenting it in documentary format, which was the acceptable format in educational television at that time, would be alien to our cultural experience. I wanted to reach my grandmother. I remembered that when I visited my grandmother, she would stay glued to the TV. So I thought, what better way of entering into a documentary format then by starting with a *novela*-type play on film, and then get into the migration. That's what we did. We filmed *La Carreta* on location in Puerto Rico, then when the family arrives in New York, we broke into the documentary format. I went out into the streets and arbitrarily selected different people in the community and asked them why they had left their countries in Latin American or the Caribbean. Most of them had left in search of a dream that unfortunately for many had turned into a nightmare. I did a montage of that experience in a documentary format and that became the pilot project for *Realidades*.

Diana Caballero, who was a specialist in bilingual education, was the associate producer and always an inspiring force. I thought it was important to communicate our bicultural experience to people who were alien to our culture and who have

provided free equipment to independent filmmakers. Lacking experience and knowledge about funding for film, Beni collaborated with Marci Reaven, an NYU student who shared her values and vision about documentary film as a tool for empowerment. They made *In the Heart of Loisaida* (1979), a black and white documentary about early housing take-overs in the Lower East Side of New York by their Latino tenants. It was made essentially through in-kind contributions of equipment, labor and a small grant from Adopt-A-Building, a not-for-profit housing organization. On the basis of the first film, she and co-partner Marci Reavens received governmental support to produce *Through Young People's Eyes* (1981), a color documentary about low-income Black and Latino children in Philadelphia.

While this film was a significant breakthrough for Matías because she now had greater control over her finances, she chose a "holistic" approach to independent film by working with other filmmakers and in other areas of the field. Beni worked as a sound recordist, associate producer and production assistant to survive and refine her skills. Continuing production, she co-directed *Housing Court* (1984), a documentary that explored the complex and arcane operation of the Bronx Housing Court, with Billy Sarokin on a New York State Council on the Arts grant and Sarokin's equipment. By teaming up with people who had access to equipment and common interests, she pragmatically solved her equipment problems. In addition to production work, she served on *Independent Focus*, a local WNET showcase for independent film and video, for five years. Later, she worked with Women Make Movies' *Punto De Vista Latina* exhibition program, presenting Latin American women's films in Latino communities throughout New York and co-edited a catalogue on Third World media. Seeking a more stable creative outlet, Beni secured a job at WNET/Channel 13 on the *Metroline* series as an associate producer and worked her way up to producer. Faced with the hiring fluctuations of public television, she currently freelances.

Pedro Rivera, a history student from San Juan, Puerto Rico, was referred by members of Sandino Films in Puerto Rico to Jaime Barrios, a Chilean filmmaker and co-founder of

these cliches and predetermined prejudices of Latinos. That we're docile or the "they have rhythm but they are lazy" syndrome. We also insisted on having a Latino crew. Again, Eddie Ramirez and Juan Rodríguez worked with us. We had a very low budget for the pilot project, but since we were used to working for little, we used the money that would have gone for salaries and expenses for the project.

When I got back from Puerto Rico, the WNET hierarchy was really turned off that I had done the film in Spanish. And besides, the image that I represented was too down, it wasn't a positive enough image. I told them that unfortunately that is the reality for my people. I wished it would be different, but since the program is called "Realities," *Realidades*, it was incumbent upon us to show the truth rather than some cosmetic cover up. They didn't know what they were going to do with the program, they threatened to can it. So my second experience was another failure [*laughing*].

We decided to invite members of the community to a special screenings of *La Carreta* at WNETand they liked it, it was unanimous. But that didn't motivate the management of the station. They backed off from their commitment to public broadcasting programing time for the Puerto Rican community in New York. This was during pledge week when viewers call in to donate monies to the station. We decided to have volunteers man the telephones while we entered into negotiations with the hierarchy of WNET. We wanted them to guarantee the *Realidades* series, and if negotiations broke down we were going to read our demands on the air live.

Young Filmakers Foundation. With his interest in history, education and film, Pedro began teaching filmmaking to Latino children at the Foundation (now known as Film/Video Arts). There he met his long-time collaborator, Susan Zeig and together with Jaime Barrios and the *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños* (Hunter College) embarked on the production of a historical compilation film about the impact of Operation Bootstrap on Puerto Rico. Continuing his collaboration with the *Centro* and Zeig, he completed *Plena is Work, Plena is Song* (1989), a documentary about working-class Puerto Rican culture expressed through the African-based music and singing of *plena*. Upon completion of that film, he taught in the public school system and is currently freelancing.

In addition to these three documentarians, who without personal financial resources and experience made their mark on Puerto Rican film and video on the East Coast, there were a number of other filmmakers on the scene dealing with issues of labor organizing; Latino music and the political status of the Island. *What Could You Do With A Nickel* (1981), a documentary film about Black and Latino domestic workers forming a union in the South Bronx was co-produced by the author of this article; Carlos Ortiz completed *Machito: A Latin Jazz Legacy* (1986), a documentary film about Frank "Machito" Grillo, the Cuban Latin jazz composer and bandleader; Zydnia Nazario, an architect by profession, directed *The Battle of Vieques* (1986), a documentary about naval maneuvers on the island of Vieques off the coast of Puerto Rico and is currently fund raising for *Linking Islands*, a documentary film about the evolution of Puerto Rican art and politics. Another of the few formally trained filmmakers of this era, Vicente Juarbe, directed *Puerto Rico: Our Right to Decide* (1984), a documentary film on the political status of Puerto Rico for the Methodist Church.

These documentarians were committed to illustrating the history, social issues and culture of Puerto Ricans so long ignored by the dominant social institutions. They were groping for a form of expression that would lend itself to the realistic depiction of the complex strategies of survival developed by Puerto Ricans in

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Federico Lora, Gina Cestero and others were on the negotiating committee. The hierarchy of WNET didn't want to succumb to community pressure. They said that if they gave in to the demands of the Latino community in New York, the next thing they knew the Jewish community would be knocking at their doors and the gay community would be knocking at their door for equal time. I thought that wouldn't be a bad idea. They maintained that nobody was going to determine for them what they should do with their programing and they broke off negotiations. So Federico said, "I think tomorrow you'll be more ready to speak with us," because it had been planned that if the negotiations broke down, a statement would be read on the air.

The community group selected Piri Thomas as their spokesperson, since he had written a bestseller, *Down These Mean Streets*, and had the most visibility. Piri read the statement which said something to the effect that "We, the members of the Puerto Rican/Latino community of New York City represent 20% of the population of this city. The public airwaves belong to all of us. They are public domain. And if we represent the Puerto Rican/Latino community of New York, then 20% of the time belong to us." That was the slogan: 20% of the people, 20% of the time. We had alerted community people working at different tv stations and in newsrooms, so when the takeover went on the air live they immediately covered it.

The next day we had all agreed that we would form a picket. There were about 250 people in that first demonstration, it was very impressive. People joined the

the midst of abject racism and poverty. While some of these films suffered from low production values as people struggled with the language of the form, limited funding and lack of experience, they more than made up for their limitations by their passionate quest for a validating image. Possessed with an insider's knowledge of the culture and an unswerving need to express themselves and create celluloid images that were more reflective of the myriad experiences of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Their overriding contribution was to defy conventional assumptions and assert that Puerto Ricans should occupy the center of cinematic discourse. Further, they privileged poor people, relegated to the margins of society, with validating images that reflected the variety of implicit and explicit responses to oppression. Some subjects internalized their oppression, others fought against it and yet others determined to survive, got around it. These multi-faceted responses to oppression gave a name and face to the invisible "other." The poor and uneducated women in *In the Heart of Loisaida*, became their own spokespersons and were elevated as community heroes for thousands to see.

■ *The Story Tellers*

While the documentary form had its advantages, it also had its limitations. A maker could only work with the material retrieved from the field—if subjects did not speak about a given point, then they were forced to rely on the narrator. Hence, most of the aforementioned films utilized narration to a greater or lesser degree. Eschewing the ebb and flow of the interview and talking heads format, a small group of makers chose the narrative form to visualize their stories about Puerto Rican experiences. The films, for the most part, expressed the subtle and complex fabric of the internalization of racism.

Pablo Figueroa, for example, directed his first narrative piece, *We, Together*, for NBC in 1974 about the dilemma of a fifteen-year-old girl who is compelled to take the reigns of the family. *We, Together* presented the interweaving nature of the family, its centrality in Puerto Rican culture and its dissolution in the face of economic and psychological hardship. Deciding to work outside the television format

picket line, including some WNET staff, who were not necessarily Latinos, but who believed in what we were doing and felt that our demands were justified. When Jay Islin came in that morning, he had a huge demonstration in front of one of the most, "liberal" alternative stations in the public broadcasting system.

Power concedes nothing without demand. As a result of that community action Jay Islin stated to the press the next day that they had found discretionary funds within their budget to guarantee this new series called *Realidades* for the first year. He said that they were planning to do it anyway, but the community demand was an exercise in consciousness raising for them, and had led them to accelerate that process that they were planning to do in the next year or two. At least it was a way for him to concede and at the same time to have a project. But, he insisted that I work with someone that the station would choose so as to have a "balance." My tactics were a little too radical for them. They wanted someone that would not only represent the community, but also would represent the interests of the station. I would be Executive Director of *Realidades* as long as the program was on the air.

Humberto Cintrón, who was working at Community News Service and had an electronic journalism background was chosen as the Executive Producer. I thought that if we had started a film workshop in the community and had taught people who have never used cameras before how to do documentaries, then we didn't need qualified people as long as we had *qualifiable* people, and that's how the staff was recruited, with that criteria. Amongst those people were Dylcia Pagan and Raquel

with its inherent formulaic limitations, Figueroa embarked on independently making *Cristina Pagan* (1976), a short narrative about a young mother who accepts the death of her child through spiritualism. Working with a core of Latino technicians at commercial equipment houses, he painstakingly made the film with free labor and his own money. Discovering film through theater, his natural affinity for fiction was realized in the narrative form and he was able to show the inner reality of oppression, while the documentarians had chosen to show its outer manifestations. Unable to secure the financial where-with-all to produce a feature film in the late 80s, he collaborated with the Committee on Hispanic Families and Children to direct *Dolores* (1988), a short narrative, shot on film but edited on video due to economic reasons, about domestic violence within the Latino community.

While Figueroa felt alone in his solitary quest to fictionalize Puerto Rican realities, Luis Soto, formerly with Sandino Films in Puerto Rico and *Oye Willie*, another Puerto Rican series produced by Lou De Lemos for PBS, was collaborating with Angela Fontañez who started out with *Black Journal*, WNET in 1968. They made *Reflections of Our Past* (1979), a short drama that featured young people traveling back in history to discover their history and culture under a state education contract. Originally part of a series of television programs for young children on Puerto Rican history and culture, only one video was produced. Soto established his own production company making promotional films and commercials and became the first Puerto Rican to direct a film for the PBS dramatic series, A[illegible]ican Playhouse. His *The House of Ramón Iglesias* (1982), a feature-length film adapted from a play about an educated Puerto Rican man who reconciles his love/hate relationship with his janitor father. The film handled the self hatred faced by many people of color head on while not sacrificing the dynamic bonds of love within the family. In 1987, Maria Norman, directed *The Sun and The Moon*, a narrative feature film about a Puerto Rican woman's personal odyssey into her identity.

■ *Searching For A Mode*

The most prolific maker to emerge

Ortíz, who at that time was a secretary doing research for PBS.

We had a Community Advisory Council, which was Diana Caballero's idea, to have greater accountability to the community. That kind of collective consensus environment worked out very well. The Advisory Council approved the people we hired. There was a criteria and the choices had to be justified and out of that came a very workable staff. Programs were also decided that way.

Another thing we demanded was to have a Puerto Rican on the Board of Directors of WNET. That was another thing that we were able to accomplish. Luis Alvarez, who at the time was working with Aspira, joined the Board of Directors of WNET. I also kept the training school operating on a volunteer basis with funds from WNET. That was one of our demands. For too long the reasons that justified not having Latinos in media was that they couldn't find qualified people to fill these jobs. At the time *Black Journal* and *Like It Is* with Gil Noble were the only minority programs on the air; and a young Puerto Rican named Geraldo Rivera was just breaking in as a cub reporter.

The *Realidades* series lasted for three years and I think that the programs that we did were the best programs that I can look back on. We also had to produce a half- hour documentary every 10 days, which was really a very heavy responsibility, especially for people who weren't veterans or used to that kind of output.

One of the first programs brought back a bit of nostalgia. It was Dylcia Pagan's idea. She proposed at these weekly brainstorming sessions that we had that a great

during the late 70s was Edin Velez. Influenced by Marshall McLuhan while studying fine arts at the University of Puerto Rico, he journeyed to New York to study video at Global Village. He became involved with the early downtown video scene of the Vasulkas in Soho. Escaping the burgeoning commercial video industry to teach at Young Filmakers Foundation, he began working on his independent productions in earnest. While he experimented with video synthesizers for a while, his first piece to receive attention was *Tule: The Kuna Indians* (1978), a representational documentary about the Kuna Indians of the San Blas Islands off Panama. His later work, *Meta Mayan II* (1981), was a visceral and evocative personal essay of his trip to Guatemala. Not wanting to become "pigeonholed as the Puerto Rican making Latino tapes," he solicited and received funding from the New York State Council on the Arts to make *The Oblique Strategist Too* (1984), about the composer Brian Eno and *As Is* (1984), a meditation on New York. In 1984, Edin, his wife and partner Ethel and the author of this paper produced *Sanctus*, the first video installation by a Puerto Rican artist at El Museo del Barrio. While living in Japan on a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, he directed *The Meaning of the Interval* (1987), a personal essay on Japanese culture and *Dance of Darkness* (1989), about Buto performance.

In an effort to define himself artistically and create his own cinematic language, Edin has explored other cultures and experimented with time, location and the boundaries of the frame within video art. He is currently making a videotape about Puerto Rico, the birthplace he fled in the late 60s. It is likely that the tape will represent a synthesis of his high aesthetic sensibility and all the ambivalence of a Puerto Rican living in self imposed exile.

■ *A Grounding in Self*

Missing from the compendium of Puerto Rican filmmakers are several important non-Puerto Rican contributors. Cuban-born and Puerto Rican-raised filmmaker Ana María García made *La Operación* (1982), about the massive sterilization abuse of Puerto Rican women, and is currently editing *Cocolos y roqueros*, a documentary about how race and class are played out

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way to show all the thanks to the community for being involved is to have a *Fiesta Boricua*, and instead of having a studio show with props, let's invite the community and set it up like the Palladium, a place that was identified with Latin music in the past. We set up tables and a bandstand, and let people come and dance and be part of the show. We invited the leading salsa orchestras, Willie Colón, Machito, Ray Barretto, and they all came. That was really an impressive show. It reached out into the community in a direct way.

La patria es valor y sacrificio brought the subject of Puerto Rican political prisoners to a network audience. The show was aired locally on WNET, but then many of the other stations within the public broadcasting system had the option of picking it up.

One of the other shows that I think has a great deal of impact for me was a special report on Chile that I did 10 days after the coup. I think I was ahead of my time in the sense that I said things in that program that none of the networks had dared to say, but I thought I could get away with it on public television. I was very naive. At that time ITT was on the corporate honor roll of WNET and they were vehemently angry when they saw the program because they had been accused along with Kennicott Copper and other companies of being among those 40 corporations that had asked the CIA to come up with a plan to undermine the Allende government in Chile. But I felt a kind of moral commitment to that show because a year or so before I had met a Chilean minister by the name of Jaime Barrios (not the

through culture in Puerto Rico. Diego Echevarria, a Chilean-born and Puerto Rican- raised filmmaker who worked at WNET and NBC for many years, directed two independently produced documentaries: *Puerto Rico: A Colony The American Way* (1981), a short film about the political status of Puerto Rico and *Los Sures* (1984), a beautifully crafted film about Williamsburg, a Puerto Rican community in Brooklyn, NY. *Los Sures* premiered at the New York Film Festival but was not well received by many members of the Puerto Rican community because of its focus on marginalized members of the community and omission of stable working class families from Williamsburg. Alfonso Beatto, a Brazilian cinematographer based in New York during the late 70s and early 80s, established the Latin Film Project as a support system for Latin American filmmakers. During that time, he directed *Paradise Invaded* (1977), a documentary film about the colonialization of Puerto Rico in collaboration with José García and other Puerto Rican filmmakers. *Los Dos Mundos de Angelita* (1978), a feature-length film about the dissolution of a Puerto Rican family after its arrival in New York, was directed by Jayne Morrison, a white woman from New York and written by a Puerto Rican. It featured an all Puerto Rican cast and many Puerto Rican/Latino crew members.

National and cultural affirmation occupied the center of these cinematic propositions as film and video makers struggled to represent and legitimize the history, conditions and cultural development of their communities in the United States. While the advent of small format video technology increased the possibilities of representation, there are only a handful of emerging Puerto Rican makers currently on the scene. Frances Negrón, an Island trained anthropologist and graduate film student collaborated with community activist Alba Martínez to create *Aids In the Barrio* (1988), a documentary film about AIDS in the Puerto Rican community. She is currently working on *Brincando el charco*, a documentary film about the development of the many Puerto Rican communities in the U.S. Well-known Puerto Rican artists Pepón Osorio and Merian Soto, who have produced short videotapes as part of their multi-media

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fimmaker Jaime Barrios in New York), on the island of Culebra. An ecumencial group was protesting the use of Culebra as a target range by the U.S. Navy and the invited navies of 14 different countries. The protestors had built a chapel on the beach and they were arrested finally, spent three months in jail, and amongst them was Jaime, he had spent three months in federal prison in Puerto Rico. That was the last time I had seen him until I was working on the Chile program when I went to interview Allende. When the *Realidades* crew arrived at the U.N., everyone was after an exclusive interview with Allende. ABC, CBS, NBC had these big goons acting as gaffers, they were more like football blockers and they wouldn't let us through. Allende was going through the hall with his entourage and I heard this guy call out "*José, José, soy yo Jaime de Culebra. Déjalo pasar.*" So we got through. I asked him what he was doing there; "*Trabajando con mi presidente.*"

We were invited to have dinner at the Waldorf with Salvador Allende, who was one of the most impressive political figures that I have ever met, second to Fidel Castro. Brilliant man, charismatic, with a winning way, and his wife, *Doña* Cortesia, a beautiful woman, with great sensibility. We accompanied him up to the front and then went out to the airport. I was able to film the interview, it was to be part of the *Realidades* show on Chile. When the coup happened, I added to that documentary part of the footage coming from Chile through Argentina of that fateful day in September 1973. We had a roundtable discussion of people that had just come back from being incarcerated in the stadium in Santiago de Chile, a Baptist minister, a

work, are currently working on a narrative film about Puerto Rican bilingualism and biculturalism, with Cuban Ela Troyano as director and Peruvian Alfredo Bejar as producer. This project represents *Mestizaje*, a cross fertilization of genre, cultures and artistic expression. Entertainment lawyer and member of the Young Lords Party quoted in an earlier section of this paper, Iris Morales is collaborating with Pablo Figueroa on an examination of the legacy of the Young Lords, a militant political organization created during the political heyday of the 60s. And yet another attorney, Nelson Denis, a Cuban/Puerto Rican who studied film briefly at NYU has been struggling valiantly to secure funding for his first feature film. A few makers have opted to work in other areas of the independent media field. Yvette Nieves-Cruz, studied cinema studies at NYU and directed *L.E.A.R.*, a videotape on the anti-imperialist artists league in Mexico. She no longer makes film or video, is instead a major exhibitor of Latino film/video at the Cinefestival of San Antonio, Texas. Because of the tenuous nature of the field, many have deserted it for more secure careers.

Puerto Rican cinema has grown from its infancy to toddlerhood with little guidance and parental direction. It has emerged and developed in spite of the structural obstacles inherent in denying "voice" within this society. As more makers gain experience and mastery over the forms of their choosing, they will use the medium with more precision, sophistication, flair and experimentation. There is still a striking need for Puerto Rican and Latino makers to produce and direct films and videotapes about a multiplicity of issues and concerns. Some of these concerns are directly linked to the status and conditions of the Puerto Rican and Latino communities in the U.S., yet it would be a grave loss if the makers limit themselves or are limited by cultural institutions and its gatekeepers to just those themes. As we live in a complex and changing world, our special place within the margins allows us to interpret American culture and society in a unique way. We can contribute to the contemporary cultural discourse by producing filmic texts that present the complexity, innovative and myriad experiences of our survival in

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physics professor from the Catholic University, and Andrés Rojas, the press relations officer of the Chilean embassy representing Allende in Washington. He only agreed to be part of the program if we could offer him safety and armed security to take him from and to the airport. We agreed to that because it was very important to have his presence. One of the first things I asked him, since he had been in contact until the very last moment in the presidential palace in Chile, was what had happened to Jaime. He said that Jaime had stayed to the end with Allende and had given his life to protect the constitution.

So then when the program was presented, Fred Bowen, who was at that time under Jay Islin—since I was doing the program in Spanish, he didn't understand what it was saying, so he couldn't exercise his censorship until after it went on the air . We had invited a member of the Pinochet government to be a part of this roundtable discussion and they had agreed to participate till five minutes before air time, but they had reneged and withdrawn from the invitation. José Iglesias, who had written an article in the *New York Times* about "Allende, the first Marxist government that had been freely elected in Latin America," and had credentials as a Latin American reporter for the *New York Times*, was the moderator for the program. When Fred Bowen saw more or less the drift of what was happening, he said to me that if this goes on the air the way it is, this could cost me my job. He asked me to take out of the documentary "one of the most bloodiest massacres in recent Latin American history" in the narration. Also that the Pinochet government was a

an often hostile terrain. Our contributions can be to deconstruct and reconstruct the assumptions of this society by presenting other perspectives that are more dialectical in embracing the contradictory nature of life and its dynamic movement. By presenting another sense of space, rhythm, time and seeing that is multi-dimensional, pollinated by a melange of rich cultures and traditions that are ever changing. To continue our process of growth as media makers and as members of various communities, we require not only more production but more Puerto Ricans actively involved in the critique and study of formal issues of film and video. We also need a Mentor program so that more experienced filmmakers pass on their knowledge as consultants to less experienced makers about the subtleties of fund raising; negotiating contracts with crews; and producing, etc . While it is heartening that organizations like the Latino Collaborative in New York provide technical assistance to encourage and pave the way, the issue of production resources remains an ever elusive one.

The films and videotapes discussed in this article grounded a generation of Puerto Ricans who had been nurtured with the dual and contradictory impulses of a colonized people with a passion to resist. We were "never meant to survive" as Audre Lorde says in her poetry and yet we survived, fought back and created. These films and videotapes are our testament to survival. They forced us to look at ourselves, to step outside of our condition and objectify our reality, to deconstruct and then visually reconstruct it with a new vision and power extracted from that painful process. They allowed us to reflect on ourselves—the films were our passageway into ourselves. As makers, we were tormented by lack of opportunity, experience and resources. As spectators, we liked what we saw; sometimes we didn't. Many times we disagreed with the interpretation, but we could never deny that we were engaged in a life-death dialogue about our existence. Those films and videotapes gave us strength. They fed us collectively. Is that what we look like? Is that what we sound like? Is that what our neighborhoods look like? Nobody ever looked at us except as objects and here we were looking at ourselves and some-

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"fascist-like military government." I defended that saying that if he could give me an example of a bloodier massacre and if he could prove to me that it wasn't a fascist-like military government, I would withdraw it. Since he couldn't, I tried to go with that. I thought that if those people were giving up much more than a job, the most vital asset that they have to give, their lives, to me giving up a job wasn't really that much of a criteria. It was an easy choice. I dedicated that program to the memory of Charles Harmon, which at the time that program was able to also explain the disappearance of Charles Harmon. As a result of the program I was fired from *Realidades* for supposedly producing a documentary that wasn't "objective" and that "advocated communism."

The issue was on the front page of *Variety* for two weeks. The program was also a kind of innovation because we had two tapes of the program running simultaneously synchronously, one was the audio band sent over the NET network into BAI and the video over the air. When Bill Greenly, a *Variety* reporter at the time, asked to see the program for a second time, because he said he saw the first program and he didn't see anything offensive for it to be canceled and maybe he had missed something so he asked Jay Islin to see the program for the second time. Jay Islin told him that it had been mysteriously burnt. So that became an issue.

I was also teaching at the State University of New York, College at Old Westbury, in the Communications, Film and Television department. Another repercussion of the show on Chile was that I was fired from the university; and I had tenure.

times we recognized ourselves—the fear, the hatred, the acquiescence, the strength and our contradictions.

Those films and videotapes came out of a movement for voice. At this historical juncture, while we have found our voice, it is still new to us. Our communities are politically fractured and there is no cohesive nature to our relentlessly slow progress. Film and video therefore, reflects the need for us to dialogue about our condition. *Dolores* and *Aids in the Barrio* by the nature of their subjects compel us to dialogue about the nature of racism, sexism and homophobia within our culture and community. The new generation that has been raised within the United States has developed its cultural referents almost totally from popular culture because there is no organized movement within the Puerto Rican communities. We require films that celebrate our emerging cultural forms that are born of a new *mestizaje*: the reality of Latino (Caribbean, Central and Latin American) and African American, Afro Caribbean shared experiences. And films that celebrate the new forms of resistance—the overt and covert forms that they take through song, language and organizations. We need a media that represents the best of *mestizaje*—a melange of our human experience with all its complexity, beauty and insight. ❐

ENDNOTES

1 *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega*, edited by César Andreu Iglesias; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984, p. xii.
2 *El Pueblo Se Levanta*, 16mm documentary film distributed by Third World Newsreel.
3 Op cit, p. 231.

The president of the University, John McGuire and Jay Islin were buddies, school chums. They felt that a person who had "advocated communism" —or it was apparently being advocated on a program—was really an irresponsible individual who had no right to be in a public university influencing the minds of students.

Pero, no hay mal que por bien no venga. As a result of being fired I went to live in Puerto Rico. I already had a budget to do a film that I had gotten from individual sources with some community backing from the Puerto Rican community where I was teaching in Long Island. The idea was to do a film about the Puerto Rican poets and women's place within our culture, which had for too long been negated. The film was about Lola Rodríguez de Tio and Julia de Burgos. To me I felt it would be more relevant to do something about now and the experience that we were living, and Julia de Burgos had lived that experience, both as a Puerto Rican in New York and in Puerto Rico. ❐

From an interview by AURORA FLORES and LILLIAN JIMENEZ in Havana, Cuba in 1987.

Of course, there had been *Mexicanos* in Hollywood ever since the beginning of the film industry, both as actors like Ramón Navarro and Delores del Rio, and even people that worked behind the cameras. We have documented individuals at work, but there was no movement to unite them. Even in the 30s through the 60s obviously there were actors; in fact, I did an interview with an actor who was popular in Hollywood in the 40s, but there was no consciousness of belonging to a political thrust. So I guess you can say that that there had been Mexican Americans in the Hollywood film industry since the silent film era, at first as desires or dreams or images of the Anglos, like in the whole first period when Hollywood produced all those greaser films. They were essentially Anglo visions of the Chicano.

The Chicano alternative film movement had three phases: from 1965, which is when Cesar Chávez walked out with the farmworkers and the beginnings of the Chicano movement, to about the mid-1970s; then from the mid-1970s till the beginning of the 80s; and through the 80s to the present. In each one of these periods there were particular films that were important, and which in themselves, gave expression to the political and social context of those periods.

The first phase, 1965 to about 1970, is when many people were working in television, in *Realidades*, and others were in film schools. The beginning cohort included Moctezuma Esparza, Jesus Treviño, Sylvia Morales and Susana Racho, and this was the moment when the Chicano movement took the form of a cultural recuperation movement. So that people recaptured the culture by going back to heritage and traditions. There were different political fronts in the Chicano movement, the most important being the farmworkers, the urban struggle with Corky González, the land grant movements with Reies Tijerina and the student movement in colleges and universities. Cutting across all the movements were certain common concerns, like the recuperation of culture, which primarily meant the indigenous, pre-Columbian culture. The film that I think capsulates this first period, is the Teatro Campesino's film of Corky González' poem *I Am Joaquín* (*Yo Soy Joaquín*). This film was first an animated slide show, and they showed the slides and then activated the film by using the slides. I think it was very representative of this moment when people had to do with whatever they had, not only in filmmaking but in many of the areas of cultural and political struggle. Corky's poem itself was very much a part of that movement: it was an epic poem, with the working class as a hero, a Chicano everyman. "*Yo soy Joaquín*, I am every Chicano and I go back in the past and I am the future," that kind of high rhetoric. I think the movie by Luis Valdéz, *I Am Joaquín* (1969), was very much related to the art forms prevalent at the time. The declamatory tone of it had to do with the tone of the murals, which were in turn like sermons, lay sermons. They had a thesis and they were put out in the *barrio*. As is particularly exemplified by Alurista, poems were sung collectively in a kind of call and response pattern with a community. *I Am Joaquín*, and the poem itself before it was a film, had many of those elements. It was heroic, it had the working class as a hero, it had the pre-Columbian, it had an historical basis, just like the murals and the poems. And so when Luis took it and made a film I think this is very representative of that first phase. It was raw, it was elemental, it was strident and it was calling people to action. It was very beautiful because it didn't rely so much on technical expertise but on raw power and emotion. The sound track had harmonica playing, a very wonderful harmonica playing songs of the Revolution and people clapping and shouting, people marching to an increasing intensity. This was very much the feeling of that particular period, marking off the beginning of the Chicano alternative cinema. The guiding notion was to look into themselves to create art forms that spoke to the community out of the community's own experience. That was the first phase.

The second phase started in about the early 70s. By this time the artists in the movement had created community-based *centros* and community-based *talleres*. They were now trying to articulate an aesthetic program in the form of manifestos, and there were film manifestos as well, like "Towards a Raza Cinema." Francisco X. Camplis wrote "Towards the Develop-

ment of a Raza Cinema" in San Francisco, there was the Chicano Cinema Coalition in Los Angeles that wrote a manifesto and others. The ideas voiced in the manifestos give evidence of two lines, maybe three major political lines. One was a cultural nationalist line that conceived of us, for example, as separate from Mexico with a distinct culture, related in some ways, but having formed a distinct culture in the United States. Mexican culture overlayed with the experience of living in the U.S. Then there was an internationalist line to the effect that the experience of Chicanos in the U.S. paralleled and had relations to what was going on in Central and Latin America. And then there was a third, the notion that Chicanos comprised an internal colony. These models were being formulated by social scientists and academicians, but culturally I think the two important ones were the internationalists and the cultural nationalists. I am saying this because I think that in the second period the visual artists were coalescing in community centers, they were making networks of dissemination with each other and so too the film people were now going out and talking with others. This in fact, is the point where they begin talking with Puerto Rican filmmakers at those media conferences on the East coast, and sharing information. And it turned out that they both had the same political orientations, one of nationalist cultural reclamation and another looking more toward Latin American.

The latter part of this period, in the mid and later 70s, Chicano filmmakers started going to Cuba. I think the representative film would be Jesús Trevíño's film *Raíces de Sangre* (1978), because it has a Chicano-*Mexicano* thematic and was financed by the Mexican film industry. It's about an attempt to form a union in the *maquiladoras*, with people working on both sides on the border. Thematically, this notion of the border, of being between and betwixt and the consciousness of that, prefigures a lot of the themes that later on will be important politically.

In the second phase there was more concern with the artistry of the film itself. By now there had been a whole slew of Chicano documentary films, and I would say that the dominant form of this second phase was the documentary. Of course, even Jesús Treviño's film *Yo Soy Chicano* (1972) is a documentary. The film has interviews and documents the movement, but it's interesting that there's a slippage into a narrative and dramatizations of certain parts of Chicano history. Of some importance is that you now have a cohort of filmmakers that have gotten training in the film schools, mainly the UCLA film school. The people had been active and had worked in television, getting access and making short documentaries for television. The ideas of Latin America were gaining ground, they had written the manifestos and they were actually trying to create a Chicano kind of aesthetics in film. I think that it was very much related to the notions of "towards a poor cinema" in Latin America. But the whole notion of documentary was very important, and that they had made alliances with other Third World film movements.

The third phase brings Chicano filmmaking right to the cusp of Hollywood; it witnessed the first inroads into the Hollywood film industry. Perhaps the most representative film of this period was Luis Valdéz' *Zoot Suit* (1981), in that it exemplifies both the role of the Chicano filmmaker in Hollywood and the film's industry's reluctant acceptance. By now Luis Valdéz had had a phenomenal success with the play *Zoot Suit*. Every step of the play forward into the larger mainstream arena made it weaker, and moved it from the real truth of Chicano art forms. When it was done by the Teatro Campesino company at the Mark Taper Forum, for example, the master choreographers who taught the company the dances of the *pachucos* were the old people who had danced the boogie and so on in the 40s, so it had a sort of authenticity that was very important. The play aimed to get the audience to respond; in fact, the Teatro Campesino had built that audience response into it. So when it was first presented, the audience involvement energized the actors and they responded back. They ad-libbed lines that were not in the script and so on; it was very much a give-and-take, a direct relationship. The first poster for the play was designed by Malaquias Montoya. At the Mark

Taper Forum it started having a phenomenal success and moved on to the Aquarius Theater.

By now much about the play was already beginning to change. In order to sustain it they needed so-called stars, and there were many other adjustments for the second phase in the Aquarius. By the time it hit Broadway, Luis had to deal with two things. First, the racism of the Broadway producers and the mainstream theater scene in general, and second, related to that, the recognition that if he was going to crossover he had to fit into the pattern. For example, for the choreography, they had to bring in the Anglo choreographer Patricia Burch known for her work in *Grease*, *West Side Story*, and so on. She stylized it, and in stylizing it she took out the real guts, the feeling for it. The production had been primarily bilingual, now they didn't even think of the Latino audience but of the mainstream English-speaking audience. So a lot of the bilinguality was lost and it was replaced by a lot more English for the mainstream English-speaking audience. Because of the Jewish audience in New York, the main woman character now becomes much more central. In the original production, and historically, the Defense Committee for the Sleepy Lagoon case had been activated by Chicanos in the *barrio*. By the time it got to New York that committee had been activated by this Anglo woman who was the key personage, and there was thus a greater interest and identification. It's not that this was not in the original play, but the underscoring and the reshaping and the recentralizing of certain characters and certain movements had much to do with the efforts to make it understandable and meaningful and attractive to the N.Y. audience though the marketing strategy was targeted for the Latino community. And so the original was diluted. It became labored, it didn't have the oomph. Just what the mainstream wanted it couldn't deliver, because the meaning the Anglo producers and backers gave it in order to make sure they got their money back stifled it and sapped it of its vitality and vigor.

I'm suggesting that the same sort of thing happened when Luis tried to do the film. On the one hand he now had a name. He had been one of the first crossovers because of the international success of the Teatro Campesino. They toured all over Europe and so on, so he had a name and recognition. Even though he was not a filmmaker, he had made *I Am Joaquín*, and everybody would say, that's a very important film. Anyway, then he got to Hollywood. Because it was a Chicano film it was of course doomed to a very low budget, and they in essence told him, you've got to do this film in x number of days. Well, because Luis is so used to making do with what you have, he turned that limitation to his advantage. Because he had always said that the teatro Chicano was a combination of Brecht and Cantínflas, he used elements from both to make the film. In the film you have all these Brechtian techniques, where the film stops and the main character talks to you directly, which is unheard of in Hollywood film. He had the actions of the play take place in a theater that you're watching once removed, so therefore the *pachuco* can comment on the action of the play and also comment on the viewer that's viewing the play and the viewer that's viewing the movie, so it's very multi-layered. And it has a lot of the force and vitality, the singing is terrific, the dancing is pretty hot, he brought back some of the original vitality of the play. So I think it's interesting and important in terms of the Hollywood formula. You can't subvert the Hollywood formula too much or nobody will see your film, but Luis managed to subvert it enough so that it became an interesting movie.

This particular film was looked upon by many Chicano filmmakers as an opening, because in this film Luis does articulate some of the ideas of Chicano film that had been developed through the first two periods. It's a film that is a sort of *rasquachi*, it's funky, it's not all of a piece, there are elements that come together in different ways; it isn't a seamless kind of narrative because of the Brechtian elements, it stops and goes, and this is very much what had been developed before. So people looked at it as a possibility of being true to Chicano concerns and perspectives in Hollywood, which then became a questionable premise. But I think that this film at least opened the door in some important and positive ways. I think that the future for Chicano alternative films in the 1990s remains open. ❑

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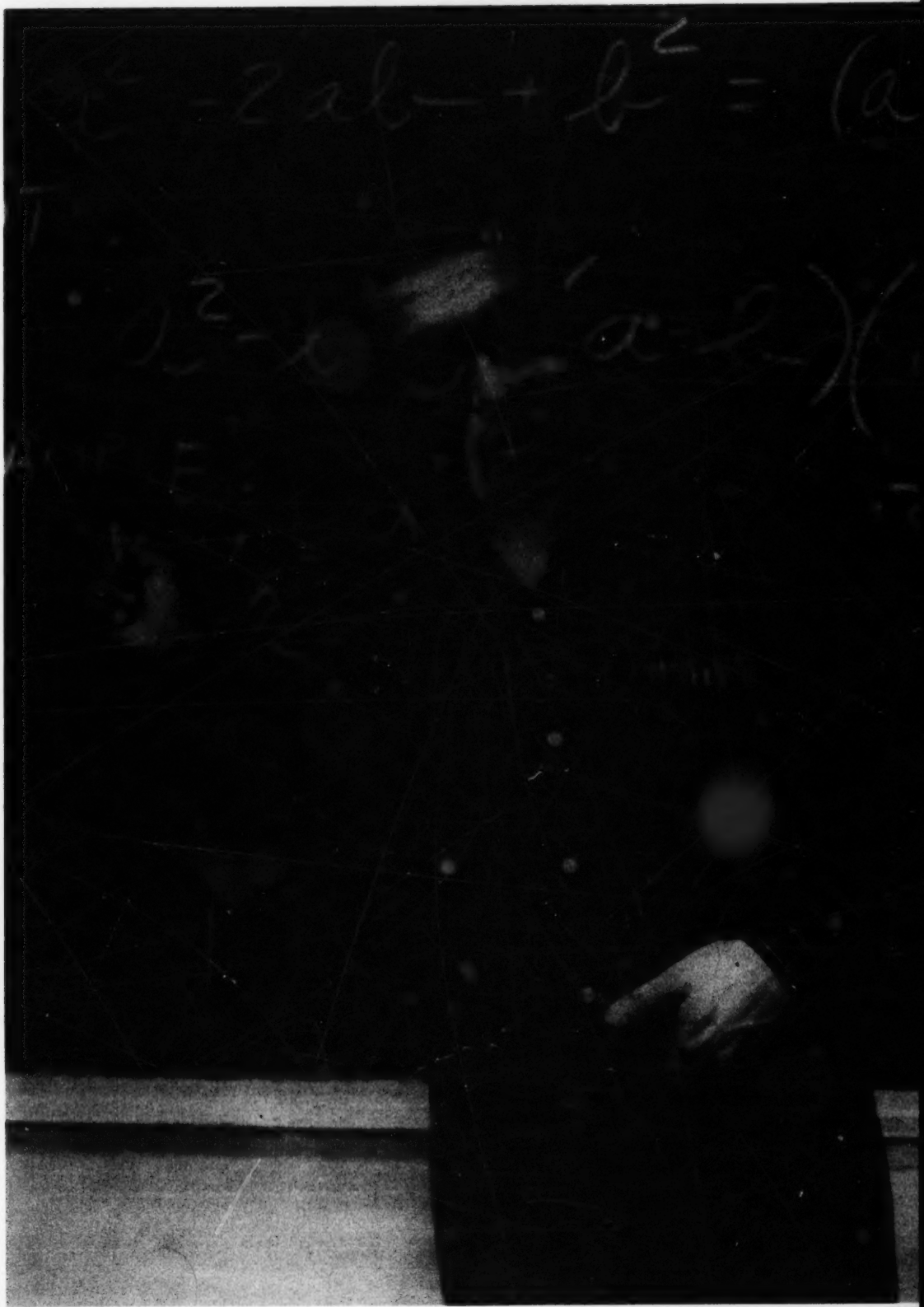

The Latino "Boom" in American Film

Coco Fusco

The following essay was originally written in Spanish, and was designed as a presentation to accompany the screening of the film Stand and Deliver *in Brazil in 1989. I was invited through the USIA's Arts America program to speak on Latino film in Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Maria and Porto Alegre. The audiences were completely unfamiliar with Latino filmmaking in the U.S. and with the details of the political struggles of Latino communities in this country. The films I chose to focus on were ones that were available commercially in South America. I learned during the speaking tour that* Stand and Deliver *had been promoted in Mexico by private interests to encourage mathematical studies. I was very intrigued by two types of responses that came up frequently during my presentations. People were shocked by the degree to which the American educational system appeared to be in crisis and treated the story as if it were a documentary. Perhaps even more disturbing was the way so many members of the audience rejected any identification with the dark-skinned Mexican-American students and seemed uncomfortable with using the term "Latino" as all-inclusive. Most of the audiences I spoke to were white and middle class. If nothing else, my lecture tour compelled me to understand the relativity of notions of Latino cultural identity, and the uneven development of racial debates in different parts of Latin America and the U.S.*

As the 1980s drew to a close the North American press heralded a "resurgence" of Latino culture in the United States. Proof, it was claimed, of this recent "boom" was to be found in the increased popularity of Latino music, food and fashion, and the success of "born again Latino" artists such as Linda Ronstadt and Vicky Carr, who had previously hidden their Latino roots behind anglicized last names.

In 1986, *The Official Story* became the first Latin American film to win an Oscar (Best Foreign Film). The award not only had symbolic impact, it also opened the door to U.S.-Latin American co-productions. In the United States, the Latino "boom" has coincided with the appearance of commercial films produced and directed, in many instances, by Latinos with different levels of Hollywood studio backing. In this paper I will focus on the recent interest in Latino culture within the United States.

Among the recent films dealing with the Latino experience in the U.S. is *Stand and Deliver* (1988), the film that has made Edward James Olmos

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■ Edward James Olmos as Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*/Photograph Courtesy of Warner Bros.

America's favorite Chicano. *La Bamba* (1987) by Luis Valdéz has been the most successful commercially, followed by *Born in East L.A.* (1987) by Cheech Marín. These films surprised Hollywood executives, forcing them to recognize the potential of the Latino market, which they are now trying to exploit better. It was after the success of these films, in fact, that Hollywood began circulating English and Spanish language versions of its Latino productions. While these films can be analyzed formally, I would argue that they have greater sociological value as "official" representations of contemporary Latino life and identity in the U.S. These movies also function to introduce Latinos to non-Latino audiences in the U.S. and Europe and to Latin Americans still residing south of the border. For generations of Latinos, increasingly removed from their roots and native language, these films also serve the function of reconstructing a collective history and memory.

First, we need to establish what we mean by the famous Latino "boom" and how these feature length films fit into the short history of Latino cinema in the U.S. We should be aware of other important reasons for the recent interest in Latinos, and why attitudes have changed in mainstream (i.e. white) North American culture. Finally, it is critical to note not only what these films reveal about Latinos, but also what they omit.

The Latino film "boom" of the 1980s actually represents only a handful of relatively low budget movies. Unlike prior films by Latino makers, these movies have been commercially distributed and some have had respectable profits. *La Bamba* for example earned $55 million in one year and *Born in East L.A.* earned $17.4 million. Before the commercial success of *La Bamba*, there were only a few feature length films produced by Latinos. Even the most important of them, such as *El Norte* (1984), *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortéz* (1982), and *Crossover Dreams* (1986), had limited circulation among "special" audiences. *Stand and Deliver*, by contrast, was made for $1 million while $4 million was spent on its promotion and distribution.

Why, then, the sudden interest in Latino films? Demographic data offer some cues. The 1980 Census shows Latinos to be the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. Moreover, 30% of the Latinos in the U.S. actually arrived after that census. Latinos are 20 million strong and spend $134 billion a year. The overwhelming majority of this population is of Mexican descent, which to a certain extent explains the predominance of Chicano protagonists in the recent spate of films. As consumers, we outspend the average North American by more than 30%. Concentrated in urban centers, Latinos have one of the highest movie going rates in the U.S., ranking as a group at the same level as adolescents and African Americans.

Hollywood's renewed interest in exploiting the Latino market in the 1980s occurs at a time when traditional political parties are recognizing Latinos as an actual and potential voting population with specific political needs and problems (such as immigration). Thus the recent interest in Latino culture is indicative of a larger socialization process which now views Latinos as North American *citizens*.

This is not the first time that Hollywood is focusing on the Latino market. Concern with Latin America goes through cycles, reflecting this country's different political agendas. The problem of stereotyping has been much-debated among Latinos—from the Latino as "*bandido*," to the Latina as the embodiment of a smoldering sensuality. Hollywood first turned to Latin America during the Second World War as part of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and to make up for the loss of the European market. Various films were made, most with a romantic, exotic vision of Latin America aimed at creating a favorable impression in the United States of that little known region which was attracting North American capital. With the growth of the Latino population in the

U.S. from the 1950s through the 1970s, films began to appear, many portraying Latinos as perpetrators of urban violence. The most famous of these, of course, was *West Side Story*. Here we see the reincarnation of the "*bandido*" as gang member. In any case, the "fault" for the difficult conditions of the Latino immigrant always falls on the individual in these films. Why young people find themselves in these unfavorable circumstances is never satisfactorily explained or examined.

It was in this context of negative screen images that independent Latino cinema emerged. Filmmakers in this period were connected to progressive civil rights movements. In 1969, a group of Hollywood actors, led by Ricardo Montalban, formed NOSOTROS, an organization to protest negative film representations of Latinos. Independent film makers produced documentaries on racism and the Chicano experience, subscribing to the theory that negative images could be balanced out with positive screen images of the community. Few producers attempted to enter television at that time—the few who did were relegated to public affairs programs, which were the cheapest to make. One notable exception was *Realidades*, made for public television and produced by New York Puerto Ricans, which aired in 1974 and lasted for only a few years.

By the start of the 80s, independent filmmakers left the industry altogether or turned to public television, given the difficulty of raising funds for independent productions. Some of the more established producers such as Chicanos Luis Valdéz and Moctezuma Esparza and the Cuban Leon Ichaso were able to produce their first feature length films during this period, mostly with governmental and foundation support.

In all cases, the filmmakers have focused on the social problems which besiege Latino communities and account for the limitations of being a cultural minority in the U.S. The central theme in these films has to do with problems of authority and power. The importance and attractiveness of the main character of *Stand and Deliver* for example, is that he projects a new image of the Latino male as a potential social force.

The Ballad of Gregorio Cortéz, directed by Robert Young and produced by Moctezuma Esparza, was first screened in 1982. It is based on a frontier legend as documented by Chicano writer and folklorist Américo Paredes. It is the story of a Mexican who lived on the Mexican border at the beginning of the century. Because of a misunderstanding Gregorio becomes identified as an outlaw confronting Anglo-American power. A victim of circumstances, Gregorio Cortéz triumphs over his persecutors and in the process is transformed into a folk hero, symbolizing the injustices committed against Mexicans and the lack of understanding which has characterized the relationship between Mexico and the United States.

A well-made "western," the film maintains a strong dramatic tension. The misunderstanding that informs the movie is manifested through the use of different perspectives and an obviously subjective cinematography. The central event illustrates the psychological fear engendered by prejudice; a sheriff comes to Cortéz' house with a translator to inquire about a horse sale. The translator fails to understand the difference in Spanish between a horse and a mare (*caballo-yegua*) and accuses Cortéz of lying. The sheriff immediately draws his gun and kills Cortéz' brother. Cortéz reacts by firing his gun and killing the sheriff before escaping. Revenge is exacted against innocent Mexicans, while the Texas Rangers begin the hunt for Cortéz. Cortéz evades them for some time, until he is betrayed by an old man seeking the reward for his capture. Condemned for murder, Cortéz is sent to 11 prisons before being pardoned in 1915.

It is significant that Cortéz, the hero, barely appears on the screen and speaks even less. Little is known about his life or his past. The tale allows us to see him as a man who is the victim of

Interview with Tomás Ybarra Frausto
The Chicano Alternative Film Movement

Among the civil rights demands of the 60s was the right to public access to the broadcasting networks. Traditionally, programming had been controlled by vested interests which, like our history books and educational institutions, had eliminated or distorted the Chicano/Mexican experience in the United States. For example, it is not surprising to find that many people in the United States do not realize that the *Mexicano* was indigenous to what is now the Southwestern United States. These people identify the Chicano and *Mexicano* as an "illegal alien" and have little knowledge of the true nature of Manifest Destiny that was used as a ploy to rob Mexico of her most northern lands. These traditional methods of programming were challenged in the courts, and the power structure reluctantly agreed to provide token public affairs programs which most often were minimally funded and programmed for off-hour time slots. Despite these obstacles, Chicanos flung themselves at the challenge of creating effective programs for their communities. From this experience a handful of Chicano filmmakers emerged who began to develop documentaries on the Chicano experience. Some of these filmmakers enthusiastically pursued the development of an alternative media that was an outgrowth of the Chicano/*Mexicano* experience—there was a cry to maintain an identity and human values that had developed from a long history and rich culture of the Americas.

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■ Edward James Olmos as El *Pachuco* in Luis Váldez' Zoot Suit, 1981. Courtesy of Universal City Studios, Inc.

social injustice, and as someone who is transformed into a hero by his opposition to the prevailing power system. He embodies the hopes and dreams of the oppressed.

From the tragic western we move to tragic melodrama with Gregorio Nava's *El Norte*. In this case, the story has to do with what happens when all access to power is blocked. It is a vision of the structures of exploitation in Central America and the United States that to a certain extent infantilize the peasant protagonists. The film has been criticized in some circles for its paternalistic point of view. It is not the structure of exploitation to which I object to, but the willingness of the protagonists to accept all at face value without any internal conflict or contradiction. In this sense, they become mere objects of exploitation.

This lack of access to power and its concommitant infantilization of the peasants is told through the story of a Guatemalan brother and sister who, though adults, act like adolescents throughout the film. They are forced to flee when their father is killed for conspiring against the boss, and their mother is "disappeared" by the National Guard. They set off for the North, a term imbued with abstract mystical power, characterized as a land that has toilets that flush.

Along the way, the film offers a study of the power relations between Chicanos, Mexicans, and Central Americans who subsist at the bottom of the hierarchy. The Mexicans take advantage of them, first robbing them and later "selling" them to a dealer in undocumented laborers. While a Mexican woman helps the sister to find employment, the brother is denounced by a Chicano who wants his job.

Nava presents the two protagonists as asexual beings who have little contact with their fellow undocumented neighbors. Completely impressionable, they fail to demonstrate any capacity to reflect upon or question the new world into which they have been thrust. The story ends with the death of the sister and the isolation of the brother, a condition which facilitates his exploitation. I do not wish to suggest that the film fails solely because it doesn't resolve the social problem it portrays. *El Norte* presents a naturalistic portrait of the marginalized, which is both unambivalent and without a critical vision of their situation—a tendency which is typical of the liberal mentality. The result is a folkloric perspective tailored to the needs of a public that wishes to lament the situation without acting upon it.

Crossover Dreams, by the Cuban director Leon Ichaso, also crosses a border, in this case one which is neither legal nor national but of social class. It is a drama of the already arrived, of a member of an economically marginalized minority from the *barrio* who wants to assimilate and be accepted by the mainstream. The protagonist, well acted by the singer Rubén Blades, is a victim both of his aspirations and of a manipulative industry. That ambiguity is perhaps what most enriches the film. Diagnosing the emotional vulnerability of a minority mentality and underscoring its relationship to machismo, Ichaso at the same time attempts to illustrate the commercialization of Latino culture and its reformulation in accordance with the tastes of the mainstream. Ironically, although it is a portrayal of failure, the real musicians in the film—Blades, Yomo Toro and Johnny Colón—are among those who have actually been the most successful in "crossing over" to an Anglo market.

The tale takes us from the West coast, where Mexican American culture is dominant, to the Caribbean Northeast. A Puerto Rican musician, Rudy Velóz, dreams of going beyond the limited circuit of small salsa clubs with their greedy big time operators. The death of his mentor opens the door for Rudy to meet a promoter who offers him the possibility of being marketed as the new Latin sensation. Knowing it or not, the promoter uses Rudy's music, a latinized rock composition as his passport to a North American audience. He has thus already created a fac-

simile of Latin music for a foreign audience. Seduced by promises of commercial success, Rudy allows himself to be manipulated by the businessmen. He demonstrates his psychological weakness by turning his back on those who are closest to him. His first reaction is to break ties with his own past—he leaves his girlfriend, friends and *barrio*. Without remorse, he replaces one of his musicians with a North American. His record fails and Rudy is abandoned by his new friends. The message is clear without being didactic: to leave the *barrio* in order to escape from one's own surroundings is to risk losing one's self, and to invite the alienation that comes with being treated as the embodiment of the exotic.

The promoters of the Latino "boom" have distinguished between these independent productions and those of the last few years, which according to them mark a decisive step in Latino cinema. However, not all the recent films have been well received. *The Milagro Beanfield War*, by Robert Redford and Moctezuma Esparza and the musical comedy *Salsa* failed at the box office, though they continue circulating in video.

La Bamba by Luis Valdéz is considered to be of pivotal importance, not only in terms of its commercial success, but also as the first Latino film whose theme was not social injustice. Valdéz, the founder of the Teatro Campesino and director of the first Chicano film, *Yo Soy Joaquín* (1969), and of the famous *Zoot Suit* (1981), here puts political messages in the background. His strategy is to recapture a chapter of forgotten history, a particularly characteristic Chicano effort, which is in this case directed to a commercial market. *La Bamba* is the story of the young rock'n'roll singer Ritchie Valens (born Valenzuela) and the exploitative workings of the music industry. While highlighting the social conditions of many Chicanos in the Southwest during the 1950s, the film is fundamentally a musical drama, a lost chapter in the history of rock, with its obvious appeal to an adolescent North American market.

The film projects the image of a Latino community lacking in leadership or its own power structure. Growing up without a father, Ritchie works at first alongside his mother as a migrant laborer. His delinquent brother, obviously victimized by the absence of a paternal figure, comes out of jail with money (illegally obtained) and takes the family to Los Angeles. Shortly after arriving, Ritchie joins a local rock band, where his singular talent stands out. He falls in love with a young blond teenager whose parents forbid her to see him. Ritchie is quickly discovered by a record producer and within a year, after recording only three songs, becomes a nationally recognized rock star. In 1957 his illustrious career is tragically cut short in an airplane crash that also takes the life of Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper.

Valens is a Chicano in a pre-Chicano era. He does not speak Spanish, has never been to Mexico and shows little interest in his roots. I don't know if the irony is intentional, but Valdéz gives us a vision in which Valens makes history by singing in Spanish a rock'n'roll version of a song, "La Bamba," he heard on his first visit to Tijuana.

In any case, Valdéz confronts an artistic problem by having chosen the Ritchie Valens story—his protagonist is not a terribly memorable or outstanding character, apart from his tragic death. In his family's recollection, he assured them a certain economic security, but his character lacks psychological depth. In order to create a tragic hero while avoiding too political a message, Valdéz uses two devices: he establishes the importance of Valens discovering his Mexican roots, and he evokes the dimension of classical tragedy by suggesting that the supernatural determines one's destiny. Valens' brother takes him to Mexico where Valens discovers the song that becomes his hit, and also introduces him to a *curandero* or healer who initiates Valens into the power of sorcery. This spiritualist theme is

connected to Valens' nightmare, which recurs in the film. The memory of the death of a friend who was killed by an airplane is an obvious premonition of his own death. The protagonist becomes a hero without power who could not control his career—on the contrary, it is his career which converts him into a personality.

The well-known Chicano comedian Cheech Marín created a vehicle for his talents with his film *Born in East L.A.*, a play on words on the Bruce Springsteen song, "Born in the U.S.A.," which at the height of the Reagan and Rambo era was interpreted as celebrating North American chauvinism. Marín suggests that to be born in the heart of the Chicano community is to be born in a world apart from the rest of the country. But he also shows that to be a Chicano in America is to be guilty until proven innocent.

The humor of the tale is his way of dealing with the dilemma of the displaced Chicano. It is a frontier farce which pokes fun at the tragic everyday problems of immigration, and at the romantic vision of the united "Raza." In *Born in East L.A.* the return to one's roots is transformed into the nightmare of not being able to separate one's self from the mother country.

The story begins with the Chicano Rudy Robles who goes to a factory to pick up his cousin recently arrived from Mexico. Rudy finds himself in the midst of a *migra* (INS) raid. Having left his papers and identification at home, he is deported to Tijuana without any money. There he runs into all kinds of crazies and religious fanatics in prison, and dealers and wheelers in the streets. He attempts to cross the border illegally several times, works in a bar and sings in the streets before organizing a massive crossing which proves successful.

Marín's comic approach allows him to deal with sensitive political themes within the entertainment field, revealing how geographical frontiers have been internalized, creating a sense of a fragmented identity. But that very strategy is limiting in not offering alternatives at a time when many are looking for solutions to the problems Latinos in the U.S. face. We have to bear in mind that the Latino cultural "boom" in itself has done nothing to offset the unmatched school dropout rates, rising rate of poverty and the increasing strength of the English Only movement.

During the 1980s we saw the resurgence of an individualistic rhetoric in the dominant political discourse, alongside drastic cutbacks in social welfare spending and bilingual education programs. It is a decade in which heroes provide solutions for a system that refuses to assume social responsibility. It is not a coincidence, then, that the mass media promotes a figure like Jaime Escalante, the protagonist of *Stand and Deliver*, as an exemplary Latino. The mathematics teacher is the first legitimate Latino patriarch Hollywood has given us in decades. Here is an exception to the long line of films focusing on Latino protagonists without any real authority. Director Ramón Meléndez offers us as a positive image the first Latino leader who is integrated into the system and into North American thought.

The film is based on the true story of a Bolivian immigrant, Jaime Escalante, a computer specialist, who leaves his comfortable life to dedicate himself to teaching in a high school in East Los Angeles, the famous Chicano *barrio*. It is evident that Escalante is looking for a cause; he converts his mathematics class into a proving ground to demonstrate the intellectual capacity of his students, who are economically and racially marginalized.

The psychological and social background of the teacher is key in this story—he is middle class, obsessed with his work but dedicated to his family, a kind of class hybrid, authoritative yet kind to his students, and terse and impatient with his colleagues. He starts by announcing his objectives, heedless of the prospect of institutional support. It is very significant that Escalante imparts scientific, not cultural or historical knowledge. Mathematics

symbolizes the priorities of a modern technological society, oriented to the future. It is also part of the necessary training for technicians, the workforce which represents modern industrial America. It is presented as a knowledge that transcends cultural differences; Escalante calls it the great equalizer.

In his class, Escalante not only presents himself as the mathematics professor, but also as a role model and adoptive father. He inserts himself in the lives of his students, acting as a counselor and even at times opposing their parents. When his students are accused of cheating in the national calculus exam, he defends them, taking the blame himself for his students having made similar errors.

Needless to say, neither mathematics nor one single high school class can represent the complexity of life—even though Escalante and the director of the film would like to give us that impression. One of the more problematic aspects of the film is the absolute power ascribed to the students' success. The narrative line of the film is vindicated because the students pass the calculus exam. But the revelation that they had made the same errors suggests that the students had learned by rote, and not how to reason.

Neither does the film give any indication of how Escalante's teaching affects their performance in other classes. In fact, we never see them in other classes, nor how they might apply this lesson to their lives outside the school. The director's and teacher's point of view are the same—all that is necessary is for the students to succeed in this one course.

As previously mentioned, Escalante's individualistic philosophy appears to be a solution to the socio-economic problems of Latino youth in the U.S. According to the professor, you need only "*ganas*," or sheer willpower, to achieve. The attention and interest which Escalante demonstrates to his students is enough to give them the confidence to learn. Yet, the strict regimen that he maintains only serves to create, as it does in all authoritarian systems, dependence on the "leader." As I have already mentioned, spending for special education programs has been drastically reduced in the 1980s. Included in those cutbacks are programs aimed at disadvantaged youth and bilingual education. The young people in *Stand and Deliver* belong to a generation that will enter a depressed job market, where the majority of jobs available are in the poorly paid service sector. The students' success at the end of the film obscures these themes and realities, which are at no point depicted in the classroom.

Even so, and in view of the film's success outside of Latino communities, it is important to note that the portrayal of well-intentioned, earnest and brave adolescents who want to learn is indeed a radical departure from the images that prevail of our youth as gang members. And Olmos, who garnered an Oscar nomination for the film, is established as a positive Latino role model, a status that has been exploited by the film and television industry ever since, but which Olmos uses in a community-based context.

Stand and Deliver was produced with funds from the public television division of American Playhouse and various private foundations, in cooperation with large North American corporations. The investors quickly saw the possibility of communicating important social messages through the medium of narrative films. Many philanthropies are increasingly interested in independent cinema for this reason. We are witnessing a gradual though clear change in funding sources for these sort of films, at the same time that public funding for the arts in general is under serious threat of curtailment.

In Hollywood we still face a situation in which Latinos participate in very few arenas—and especially those most invisible to the public—as producers, directors and actors. There are few Latino technicians and no Latino executives at the major studios. For many, the "boom" has opened the door and created opportunities, and the

recent favorable attention has generated a sense of pride and hope. I would argue that, sadly, not much has really changed. Hollywood continues to churn out films set in Latin America (where it is much cheaper to film) with stereotypical representations of Latinos and their cultures. It also continues to produce action films and thrillers, the bread and butter of barrio movie houses, with extremely exploitative renderings of ethnic communities. The industry's economic needs will always predominate over a sense of social responsibility. The extent to which progressive or positive images make a long-term impact in an overwhelming racist context is about as questionable as the assumption that entirely "positive" or "authentic" representations of underrepresented groups is possible or favorable. But those who care about the past and are concerned with the implications for the future will continue to question the significance of the present critical period. The current "boom" focuses on the success of individuals, a creation of the North American press, but the advance and development of Latino culture within the U.S. will be the result of a long process, initiated by those who claim the right to produce culture in the name of the community. ❑

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Unofficial Stories: *Documentaries by Latinas and Latin American Women*

Liz Kotz

The picture North Americans have of Latin American cinema—at its most militant and its most conventional—tends to be overwhelmingly male. Of all the well-known films that comprise what has become known as New Latin American Cinema,[1] only one available in the United States—Sara Gomez' *One Way or Another*—was directed by a woman. This perception persists, despite the diverse and growing body of work by Latin American women—including that by Latinas in North America—which has developed over the past 10 years. In the last two to three years in particular, the sheer quantity of work by such women and the increased opportunities to share contacts and experiences across national boundaries has led to an awareness of a movement that is changing the shape and the direction of New Latin American Cinema. However, outside a handful of features—*The Hour of the Star*, by Susana Amaral; *Patriamada*, by Tizuka Yamasaki; and *Camila*, by Maria Luisa Bemberg—this work remains all but invisible in the United States.

What little attention has been given by U.S. exhibitors and critics has focused almost exclusively on feature films. Despite some recent exceptions, entry into this sector remains limited to the "exceptional few," and the myriad short experimental and documentary films and tapes made by women have largely been generated at the margins of existing film communities—outside the government-funded film institutes and national television systems. This situation is exacerbated further by the tendency to embalm Latin American cinema in the "great directors" model of foreign cinema; witness the current popularity of the program *Dangerous Loves*, an internationally co-produced package of six films based on stories by Gabriel García Marquez. Such programs demonstrate the capabilities of relatively high-budget, studio-based filmmaking in Latin America. At the same time, independent film and videomakers throughout the continent are producing a challenging and tremendously varied array of work. And, as conditions that influence and structure independent production increasingly become international issues—the polarization of mainstream and marginal cinemas, the hegemonic influence of national and international television networks, and the rapidly increasing use of video—Latin American independent media has great relevance for independent producers in this country.

These are also the sectors within which women producers, the vast majority of whom are under the age of 40 (and thus in the early stages of their careers) work. While few have become familiar names on the international film festival circuit, they engage a series of critical issues—what it means to be a bicultural filmmaker, for instance, or what it means to be a woman in a

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country undergoing a twentieth-century industrial revolution—which promise to expand contemporary cinematic practices, particularly in such genres as documentary.

By examining some recent documentaries by Latin American women alongside works by Latina producers in the United States, I am not attempting to efface the differences between filmmaking in Latin America and the U.S. but instead hope to address the increasingly transnational nature of this activity. This approach reflects a changing cultural landscape, where a number of "immigrant cinemas" and "ethnic cinemas" have sprung up alongside more traditional "national cinemas" and where alliances among those who produce, distribute, and exhibit alternative media are forming across political borders and linguistic boundaries. While omitting many important areas of activity, my discussion will outline some of the shared interests evident in this work and situate it within emerging networks of women producers throughout Latin America, the U.S., and Canada.

In the past two years, a series of key events have helped to build recognition and momentum for this emerging "movement." In October 1987 Zafra A.C. in Mexico City hosted a festival of films and videos by Latin American women, the *Cocina de Imagenes* (Kitchen of Images), at the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico City.[2] As well as presenting 12 hours of work each day during the 12-day event, the festival provided a major forum and an opportunity for Latina producers to meet, become acquainted, and discuss crucial issues. Almost 100 women—over half from outside of Mexico—attended the mass one-day meeting held during the festival to explore problems and plan strategies. The simple fact that there was enough work by Latin American and Caribbean women to provide almost two weeks of programming was an eye opener for many, while the obvious range of styles, traditions, and contexts—from made-for-TV movies to activist videotapes—exploded any preconceived ideas of what constitutes "women's filmmaking." The *Cocina* also resulted in the formation of a biannual publication *Boletín Cine/Video/Mujer* (edited in Canada by film scholar Zuzana Pick[3]) and preliminary plans for another festival in 1989.

Additionally, in the past few years the Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana has featured events that showcase the work of women filmmakers, including screenings of major films and large public forums.[4] Although some Latin Americans have questioned the central role Cuba plays in setting international agendas for Latin American film—the Havana festival, the Foundation for New Latin American Cinema, the magazine *Cine Cubano*, and the new *Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV* are all based in Cuba—this annual gathering provides the only regular opportunity for Latin Americans to see work from other Latin American countries. Most of the other major institutions that collect and disseminate information about Latin American cinema are based in the United States, a development that poses questions about the consequences of North American institutions setting the terms of discussion for Latin American media. Regarding work by women, these institutions have become particularly powerful, because the circuits of communication and diffusion of information based in Cuba have tended to neglect the work and concerns of women producers.

In spite of the conservative programming at most film festivals and larger exhibition venues in the U.S., some active efforts are now introducing a range of nonmainstream Latin American work to audiences here. Both the San Antonio Cine Festival and New York-based National Latino Film and Video Festival reflect the explosion of independently produced work. Projects like the Democracy in Communication program of Latin American popular video organized by Karen Ranucci, X-Change TV's subtitling and distribution of Central American television

programs, and the Latino and Latin American components of the satellite-distributed public access series Deep Dish TV promise to rethink the diffusion of foreign and minority media in this country. In addition, the *Punto de Vista: Latina* (Point of View: Latina) series assembled by the U.S. nonprofit distribution company Women Make Movies represents a sustained commitment to acquire and subtitle current Latin American works as well as circulate a permanent collection for educational distribution nationwide.

Last October, Cine Acción, a San Francisco-based non-profit organization of Latino and Chicano film and videomakers sponsored the Mujeres de las Americas/Women of the Americas Film and Video Festival, which I codirected. In the course of that event we presented over 60 independently-produced works by Latin American women, about one-third of which were unsubtitled and/or undistributed in the U.S. Almost a dozen filmmakers from Latin America and the East Coast met with the local film and Latino communities during the five-day event, which featured panel discussions on documentary work, Central American media, and Chicana filmmaking. In Canada, Groupe Intervention Video has developed innovative distribution programs designed for educational and feminist audiences, expanding from its original French-language base in Québec to include English-language tapes and materials for distribution throughout the country.

At both the Cocina and the Cine Acción festival, the preponderence of documentary work was striking; over 75 percent of the films and tapes screened at both events could be placed in this category. The historical reasons for women using documentary have frequently stemmed from greater professional opportunities in television and journalism, as opposed to the notoriously male-dominated world of feature film production. Yet the vagaries of institutional sexism don't sufficiently explain why so many women are producing documentaries, since the majority of work is made without institutional support or funding. Certainly documentary work provides an important point-of-entry for beginning film/videomakers involved in collective and community organizing. Documentary can also appeal on a psychological level: When unsure of one's identity as a filmmaker, one can be grounded by—perhaps hide behind—the demands of the subject matter. In addition, the economics of filmmaking in most countries clearly favor documentary production. In any case, documentaries in general and television journalism in particular have provided a crucial training ground for large numbers of women film and videomakers, many of whom have used this as a springboard to work in other genres.

But there is another kind of appeal that documentary media may have for women film/videomakers in Latin America—the attraction of those people who are ignored or underrepresented in the dominant media to forms that document their own reality, culture, and perceptions. While documentaries done by women in Latin America comprise a vast field with many different formal tendencies, a great deal of this work maintains a realist aesthetic and adheres to traditional documentary criteria for accuracy and authenticity, if not objectivity.

The New York City-Puerto Rico film/video axis has given rise to some of the most cogent analyses of U.S. neocolonialism and the complex situation of women living under regimes of internal and external colonization. Two documentary films addressing Puerto Rican issues, Ana María García's *La Operación* (The Operation) and Zydnia Nazario's *The Battle of Vieques* trace the inseparability of private lives from the dynamics of international imperialism and hegemony. Likewise, both works address the status of Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States and analyze local Puerto Rican problems in relation to larger

issues of U.S. racism and imperialism. García, a Cuban woman now living in Puerto Rico, directed the Cine Festival San Juan held this past October; she is currently producing *Los Roqueros y los Cocolos* (working title), a film about youth cultures based on rock and salsa music in Puerto Rico and the intersections of class and ethnicity encountered in these communities. Nazario, who works in New York as an architect, is developing a new film tentatively titled *Linking Islands*, which explores identity and language in the poetry and visual art of various Puerto Rican artists living on and outside the Island.

Released in 1982 and used extensively in political organizing and educational settings, *La Operación* was a founding work of Latin American women's cinema. The chilling documentary examines the practice of sterilization of Puerto Rican women—a practice so common that it is simply known as *la operación*. In doing so, it presents a ground-breaking reformulation of feminist politics of the body and reproduction. Weaving interviews and historical analysis with graphic scenes on the operating table, the film exposes the imposition of this practice on the Puerto Rican population and suggests how it was subsequently imposed on poor women of color living in the United States.

The Battle of Vieques (1986) also deals with colonialism—specifically the U.S. militarization of the small Puerto Rican island of Vieques and the subsequent destabilization of the islanders' lives and livelihoods. After the military usurped most of the land on the Island, destroying the local economy, the Viequenses took up fishing. NATO bombing raids subsequently damaged the coastal ecology and made this work too dangerous. Now, residents are faced with a choice between work in U.S.-based hi-tech and munitions industries or emigration.

Incorporating extensive archival footage, *The Battle of Vieques* describes the history of the Island, which lies southeast of the Puerto Rican mainland, as a strategic naval base that has become a gateway to U.S. military operations in the Caribbean and Central America. In the film, Nazario reveals the conflicts produced when a militaristic culture is introduced into an agricultural society. In one scene, island fishermen enact a David and Goliath struggle against U.S. warships. Elsewhere, a Puerto Rican band is shown playing "The Star Spangled Banner" at a naval ceremony; off-key and listless, the performers seem bored and uncomfortable. In interview segments, islanders argue about the expanding role of the U.S. military in their society and discuss problems of unemployment that make the Navy's presence attractive to some.

The Battle of Vieques and *La Operación* both chart the complex power relations and permeable borders between First and Third Worlds. These films represent works of an explicitly Puerto Rican immigrant cinema—works posed on the edge between two cultures, addressing both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking audiences. They also marked a shift in North American awareness of Latino filmmaking, which in the seventies had focused on the emerging Chicano cinema movement. (The San Antonio Cine Festival, for instance, originally served as a forum for Chicano film, but quickly moved to incorporate work from Latin America and other Latino cultures in the U.S.) This work—and its complex position as both an "ethnic" and "immigrant" cultural practice—engages issues of address, audience, and interlinguality in a rapidly changing context of neocolonial relations.

Another tendency in media made by Latin American women is the integration of documentary and fictional forms, which can be seen in fiction films that use documentary footage and techniques as well as such documentaries as *La Mirada de Myriam* (Myriam's Glance, dir. Clara Riascos/ Cine Mujer, Colombia, 1986), which incorporates reenactments, flashbacks, and fictional elements, along with

documentary sequences.[5] Recognizing the complex relationships between women's external and internal realities, biographical and autobiographical works like *Diario Inconcluso* (Unfinished Diary, dir. Marilu Maillet, Canada/Chile, 1983) and *Ana Mendieta: Fuego de Tierra* (Ana Mendieta: Fire of the Earth, dir. Nereyda García Ferraz and Kate Horsfield, USA, 1988) entail a multi-leveled reworking of the ways documentaries organize and present information.

A mix of documentary, autobiography, and personal diary, *Diario Inconcluso* is a sometimes ambiguous and disorienting depiction of the life of a Chilean woman living in Montreal. The film delves into the personal experience of exile and loss, employing documentary and fictional elements that depart from a realist documentary aesthetic in order to impart a visceral sense of confusion and grief. A disturbing and often painful work, *Diario Inconcluso* follows the filmmaker as she enacts the routines of her daily life: discussions with her mother, a visit with Chilean friends, an argument with her Australian husband, and her work at a television studio. Alternating between French, English, and Spanish, language becomes a battleground of identity, as the filmmaker raises a child in a country she herself can never call home.

García and Horsfield's tape *Ana Mendieta: Fuego de Tierra*, which was coproduced with Branda Miller, is a video portrait that recounts the life and work of the late Cuban-American artist. Produced to accompany a retrospective exhibition of Mendieta's sculpture and performance documents, the tape explores the politics and emotions that shaped her unusual and syncretic art. Although García and Horsfield avoid the subject of Mendieta's highly publicized and still unresolved death in 1985, they develop a complex reconstruction of memory and loss in an attempt to come to terms with Mendieta's powerful personal and artistic legacy. The video constructs a series of fragmented perceptions that follow the continuities and discontinuities in Mendieta's life: born in Cuba, sent to live in the U.S. as a child soon after the Cuban revolution, Mendieta ended up in an orphanage in the Midwest hopelessly out-of-place and separated from her family and any emigré/exile community. Photographs from her childhood and adolescence; reminiscensces by family members, former teachers, and colleagues; and Mendieta's own stunning documentation of her performances and installations constitute the collage portrait. Like Maillet's film, García and Horsfield's tape suggests the collisions and disjunctures of immigrant experience, belonging to two worlds and yet not entirely at home in either. This effect is underlined in interviews with members of the arts communities in New York and Havana, who describe how Mendieta's interest in rebuilding cultural ties with Cuba reflected a deeply personal quest for connection.

An equally dense and imaginative work grappling with contemporary problems of biographical filmmaking, *La Mirada de Myriam*, by the Colombian collective Cine Mujer,[6] explores shifts in identity—the deep changes in what it means to be a woman—in a rapidly and often chaotically industrializing country. Like their earlier film *Carmen Carrascal* (dir. Eulalia Carrizosa, 1984), *La Mirada de Myriam* portrays a poor woman who overcomes fierce obstacles to build a creative and satisfying life. At first, the film appears to be a conventional documentary about a single mother building a life as a squatter in the outskirts of Bogotá. But this initial impression is challenged and extended by dramatic recreations of the protagonist's childhood memories and fears, including a mystical sequence in which a rural healer cures Myriam's "evil eye." The director, Clara Riascos explains:

> *La Mirada de Myriam* was a project that was started by Myriam herself. Myriam Ramirez is in her early thirties, a single mother with three kids, who lives in a outlying *barrio*

> of Bogotá. She is a very sensitive woman with a very sad past who developed an inner strength and imagination that have enabled her to struggle to overcome the obstacles that had condemned her to poverty. There was a certain magical element in this. After having had a sad, very abusive childhood, she is now a protector of the kids. She started a day-care service in her neighborhood and learned how to run it herself.[7]

Although perhaps best known in the U.S. for their earlier humorous feminist short *¿Y Que Hace Su Mama?* (What Does Your Mother Do?, 1983), in *La Mirada de Myriam* Cine Mujer departs from their previous cinematic strategy, which contested women's oppression through realist representations, and develops more indirect and provocative techniques to elaborate the complexity of women's private and public lives. This approach engages traditional elements of storytelling and fantasy to explore the psychological dimensions of empowerment and transformation. Grounded in the daily concerns of poor women, the film nonetheless provides powerful analyses of social dynamics and political issues.

An alternate approach to the problem of biography—how to convey the changing and conflicting aspects of female identity—is posed by the "collective portraits" produced by Lilith Video. Lilith, a women's video collective in São Paolo, Brazil, has produced several short documentaries, including *Mulheres Negras* (Black Women, dir. Silvana Afram, 1985) about racism and racial identity in Brazil; *Beijo na Boca* (Kiss on the Mouth, dir. Jacira Melo,1987), composed of interviews with prostitutes in São Paolo's Boca do Lixo district; and *Mulheres no Canavial* (Women in the Cane Fields, dir. Silvana Afram, 1987), which profiles various rural women who cut cane. Each of these tapes combines multiple interviews in order to represent the range of experiences, thoughts, and feelings within specific groups of marginalized women. Jacira Melo, a member of Lilith, has described the interrelation of formal experimentation with the documentary material:

> You have so much freedom with video to develop approaches and discover a rhythm that suits the material, since video has so little tradition. For example, our work *Mulheres no Canavial*, made in a rural area with women who cut cane, has a different rhythm than projects we shot in the city. It was an attempt to make a work very close to the rhythm of these women's lives. They have a very different pace of moving, of talking, a different rhythm of expressing themselves. I think that these questions of pacing, language, and form mean a constant search for each subject.[8]

As Latin American women have become increasingly active in political organizing, often taking the lead in countries where traditional forms of radical protest have been coopted or eliminated through repression, several documentary films have covered the development of these movements and their efforts to articulate political agendas outside of traditional power structures. Both *We're Not Asking for the Moon* (dir. Mari Carmen de Lara, Mexico, 1986) and *Las Madres: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (dir. Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo, USA, 1986) address an emerging political subject—in the first case, a new union of Mexico City seamstresses, and in the second, the mothers and grandmothers of Argentineans who were killed, imprisoned, or "disappeared" during the military dictatorship. Made to inform both local organizing and international support campaigns, these films exhibit strikingly different forms of address, although both attempt to mobilize and sustain popular memory in ways that overcome institutional silence and repression.

We're Not Asking for the Moon documents the formation of the independent seamstresses' union in the wake of the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City. Made as an organizing film, *We're Not Asking for the Moon* was originally produced for the seamstresses union with their cooperation. Whereas most First World news organizations framed the earthquake in the clichéd and ahistorical discourses of natural disaster and human tragedy, de Lara's film examines the politics of the destruction and its aftermath by juxtaposing interviews with the seamstresses and their families with the official interpretation of events given by government spokesmen and Mexican television. As the film progresses, it engages a whole network of local "cultural knowledges" (to use the formulation by British critic Paul Willemen[9]) that allow the viewer to situate events within contemporary Mexican history. At times, this technique may hinder understanding of the film for foreign viewers unable to read the complex political landscapes and the histories they draw upon. However, the absence of an explanatory narrative functions very effectively to insert the viewer into the experiences of chaos, grief, and confusion as the magnitude of the disaster and the obstacles to the seamstresses' efforts unfold.

De Lara organizes information and material to reveal the conflicting forces and tensions that underlie the events she depicts and thus evokes a dense history of political institutions, resistance, and repression. For instance, in one segment she intermixes shots of state-sponsored May Day celebrations in the Plaza de la Constitución—an homage to the government's cooptation of the "recognized" unions—and shots of the seamstresses demonstrating and being attacked by police. This sequence juxtaposes two relationships between state power and workers' organizations, emphasizing in the process the threat that the independent women's organization poses to both traditional union hierarchies and unresponsive government bureaucracies. In addition to the specific historical meanings implicit in this scene, it provides a deft representation of relations of power in a society where many historical bases of opposition have been effectively incorporated into the centralized political structure of Mexico's largest political party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which has consistently repressed independent political movements.

We're Not Asking for the Moon has become an important and controversial piece in Mexico, and de Lara, a graduate of the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos (the Mexico City film school), is now working on two other projects: a collectively-produced documentary on environmental concerns and a dramatized/recreated documentary on political prisoners and terrorism in Mexico. Her films represent some of the excellent work being done by a younger generation of filmmakers who, rather than aligning themselves with the state-sponsored film apparatus (which is currently just about bankrupt and subject to widespread state censorship), are taking important roles in Mexico's changing political landscape. In search of fresh approaches and new audiences for independent film, many of these women are working in narrative forms—for instance, the highly innovative short fiction film by María Novaro, *An Island Surrounded by Water* (1986), which employs hand-tinted images and poetic personal filmmaking devices to tell the story of a girl whose mother has left to join a guerrilla movement in the interior of the country.

Both Mari Carmen de Lara and Lourdes Portillo are concerned with how their films help to construct a popular memory—reinvoked in times of crisis. And both the mothers in Argentina and the seamstresses' union in Mexico City have used documentary films to convey information as well as to provide inspiration. Discussing specific uses of *We're Not Asking for the Moon*, de Lara states:

"We trained garment makers to be projectionists, because the main reason for the film was to help the union get more members. What's most important is for the film to have a practical application. Also, when split over some issue, recently, they sat down and watched the film and recovered their mission and unity."[10]

The tactic of engaging local "cultural knowledges" to shape an activist film, used so effectively in *We're Not Asking for the Moon*, poses a problem in works of "immigrant cinemas" like the films made by Portillo and Susana Muñoz. Muñoz, an Argentinean who lived in Israel before coming to the United States, and Portillo, who grew up in Mexico and moved to the U.S. as a teenager, live in San Francisco. Unlike the dense national consciousness embedded in de Lara's and Novaro's films, Portillo and Muñoz' collaborations *Las Madres* and their more recent *La Ofrenda* (The Offering, 1989) address a lack of shared awareness/information between filmmaker and audience and thus broach the problem of constituting an audience for immigrant cinema. In *Las Madres* the task was to make the private anguish and political struggle of the Argentinean mothers and grandmothers comprehensible to a North American and international audience that was not, when the film was produced, very familiar with the plight of the *desaparecidos* and their families. Concerning audience, Portillo explains, "The film wasn't made for the mothers but for the rest of the world. But it's had such a success that even the mothers use it now to rekindle interest."

At the Cine Acción festival, Portillo reflected on her position as the maker of immigrant cinema, in contrast to most of the Latin American participants, whose work, however marginal, addresses a national audience. She discussed the problems of trying to recuperate her relationship to her own cultural heritage and of attempting to explain that culture to a foreign—Anglo-U.S.—culture. This becomes a central concern in *La Ofrenda*, which examines the observance of Day of the Dead ceremonies in Mexico and San Francisco, where the tradition had died out and was reintroduced largely by the Chicano arts community in the 1970s. What is the fate, the filmmakers seem to ask, of folk customs in a diaspora culture? Whereas the Mexican observances are imbued with spontaneity and a lack of self-consciousness about indigenous ritual celebrations, the San Francisco scenes suggest nostalgia. Unlike the Oaxacans who describe practices handed down by abuelitas and community memory, the Chicanos who speak in the film analyze their involvement in *Day of the Dead* rituals and the role it plays in their lives. The film implies that, having been lost, culture is something that must be recovered, rediscovered, taught, and explained.

This tension is reflected in the film's structure, which employs extensive narration to explain the Mexican practices and their history to audiences in the U.S. At work recutting the voiceover as this article went to press, Muñoz and Portillo expressed frustration with the need to translate, explain, and provide basic information. Without a social and historical context, they feared that the Mexican footage would become just another set of pretty, exotic images for consumption. But too much historical background distances and potentially dilutes philosphical issues about duality and death raised in the film. Funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and slated for broadcast on public television, *La Ofrenda* illustrates some of the problems entailed in making immigrant cinema for a mainstream audience: how to present immigrant/ethnic cultural practices without becoming caught in the sets of viewing conventions—"exoticism" and "education"—reserved for other cultures; how to present images of Mexico that resist incorporation into the representations of that culture already developed by

mainstream media.

A very different approach to such questions is taken in the unusual found-footage documentary *From Here, From This Side* (1988), by Mexican videomaker Gloria Ribe, which presents a powerful essay on North-South relations. Made from clips of U.S. and Mexican films and television—all "borrowed" and rephotographed—the videotape addresses the power relations between "central" and "peripheral" countries. Ribe's assemblage of overdetermined images and materials graphically demonstrates how these relations structure cultural discourses. At the same time she refuses any claim to cultural authenticity. Instead, the tape explores the places assigned by these discourses and the world that they construct.

Ribe's earlier videotape *Tepito* (1987) used conventional documentary techniques to portray a historic working-class neighborhood in Mexico City, but *From Here, From This Side* marks her growing frustration with the such strategies—the attempt to "capture" reality with interviews and provide yet more information "capsules" to a TV-soaked culture. One reason Ribe cites for her choice is the considerable time and money required by "pure" documentary filmmaking and the irony of interviewing people in order to record statements that are predetermined. Speaking at the Cine Acción festival, Ribe joked, "Maybe realism is one of the biggest fictions ever created."

In part, her found-footage technique also responds to the traditional position constructed by documentary film in relation to Third World subjects. Ribe noted how, by concentrating on Third World misery, documentaries tend to reproduce a construction of the Third World as "victim." Viewing Mexican television as official and closed to dissent, she proposes her technique as a means "to change the victimness of the Third World personage. On TV, you have fragments of reality without anything making sense of them. You take them like a pill every morning— that's why they're called capsules—and we overdose on these pills."[11]

Ribe's concerns and strategies resonate sharply with many First World critical practices, and her work has received considerable attention in the independent video community in the U.S., giving it a certain "crossover" status. In addition to screenings at last year's International Public Television Conference in Philadelphia and the Cine Acción festival, *From Here, From This Side* was included in the American Film Institute's 1988 National Video Festival and subsequently exhibited in San Francisco at New Langton Arts—not a venue known for its attention to Latino or Third World media.

Both *La Ofrenda* and *From Here, From This Side* suggest interesting questions about the borders of New Latin American Cinema and the appropriation and reappropriation of cultural practices, images, and discourses. Both North and South America are sites of unprecedented flows of populations and cultural practices—especially in mass media. A major influence on these developments is U.S. mass media, which saturates the film and television circuits throughout Latin America. The resulting transnational character of media technologies, techniques, and visual languages makes it increasingly difficult to demarcate the boundaries between "First World" and "Third World" media. As people from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean have immigrated to the U.S., often fleeing the repurcussions of U.S. neocolonial involvement abroad, more established communities of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans have been joined by growing numbers of Dominicans, Colombians, Chileans, Ecuadoreans, and Salvadorans. The traditional segregated model of U.S. Latino populations—Chicanos/Mexican-Americans in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the East, and a handful of Cubans in Florida—no longer accurately describes the diversity of Latin American cultures in this country and their relationships with white, African American, and

Asian North American cultures.[12]

These historical experiences of immigration, dislocation, and displacement have profound implications for discussing Latin American cinema. Situated on the border between two—or more—cultures, those who make documentaries like those discussed here are often forced to formulate film languages that can address not just different audiences but divergent modes of organizing and receiving information. And a video like *From Here, From This Side*, which entails a critical view of both U.S. and Mexican cultural clichés, will be received differently on each side of the border. Likewise, a film like *Las Madres*, made to inform an international and North American audience, will function differently when shown in Argentina. Work that is oppositional in a Latin American context may not be in the U.S. and vice versa.

Although relatively little has been written in English on Latino cinema in the United States,[13] recent critical work on Latina literature offers some useful parallels. An important contribution to criticism of writing by women from diverse traditions—Chicana, Puertorriqueña, Cuban-American, and immigrant/exiled Latin American—*Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writings and Critical Readings*,[14] problematizes the bilingual or interlingual text and its exclusion from both English and Latin American literary canons. Another example can be found in contemporary Black British filmmaking and related projects—in sociology, music, and media studies—concerned with the processes of dislocation, adaptation, and hybridity developed in diaspora cultures.[15]

Just as one current in Black studies has adopted the model of "cultures of Africa and the African diaspora," the American migrations of the past decade propose parallel developments in Latin American diaspora cultures. Intersecting class, national, and ethnic identities, complicated by personal experiences, reflect a contemporary history of Latin America (and the United States) in which exile, rupture, transnational migration, and bicultural identity have become relatively common.[16] With this in mind, the range of recent documentary films and tapes by Latinas and Latin American women raises a series of questions: How does the diversity of Latina media "fit" into analyses of North American and Latin American cinemas? How do critics—both First and Third World—situate this work by film/videomakers who are themselves bicultural? And how do white North American critics, such as myself, write about these emerging immigrant cinemas without reduplicating problematic relationships between Third World cultures and First World critics? The traditional method of identifying and delineating "national cinemas" may no longer be adequate for understanding transnational networks of communications—not to mention a world where the category of "national culture" is itself hotly contested. ❑

ENDNOTES

1 New Latin American Cinema refers to a movement of filmmaking that emerged in Latin America in the late 1950s. For an analysis of "the complex network of determinants that catalyzed the movement's emergence and later, its effort to achieve pan-Latin America unity," see Ana Lopez, "An 'Other' History: The New Latin American Cinema," *Radical History Review*, No. 41 (Fall 1988). For an examination of work by women within New Latin American Cinema, see B. Ruby Rich, "After the Revolution: The Second Coming of Latin American Cinema," *Village Voice*, February 10, 1987, pp. 23–27, and Patricia Vega, "Video Work by Women," in the exhibition catalogue *Latin American Visions*, Pat Aufderheide, ed. (Philadelphia: Neighborhood Film and Video Project, 1989).

2 Organized by a group of women filmmakers and supporters associated with the independent distribution company Zafra and headed by Mexican filmmaker Angeles Necoechea, the Cocina took place two weeks before the fourth annual Latin American women's

"Encuentro," also held in Mexico City. For more information on the event, see Julianne Burton, "A Feast of Film-Video: Notes from the Cocina," *Cine Acción News*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1988).

3 Available from Film Studies Department, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6, Canada.

4 For a report on presentations at the 1986 Havana Festival, see *La Mujer en los medios audiovisuales: Memorias del VIII Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano*, (Mexico City: Coordinacion de Difusion Cultural/UNAM, 1988).

5 For example, Tizuka Yamasaki's film *Patriamada* (Brazil, 1985), which incorporates extensive documentary footage into its dramatic narrative, or Solveig Hoogesteijn's *Macu: The Policeman's Wife* (Venezuela, 1987) and Susana Amaral's *The Hour of the Star* (Brazil, 1985), which use a documentary aesthetic in the context of feature films.

6 The Cine Mujer collective, founded in 1978, consists of Sara Bright, Eulalia Carrizosa, Dora Cecilia Rameriz, Particia Restrepo, Clara Riascos, and Luz Fanny Tobon.

7 "Entrevista con Cine Mujer," *Cinemateca: Cuadernos de Cine Colombiano*, No. 21 (March 1987), p.17.

8 See Liz Kotz, "An Interview with Lilith Video," *The Independent*, Vol. 11, No. 7 (August/September 1988).

9 See Paul Willemen, "An Avant Garde for the Eighties," *Framework* No. 24 (Spring 1984).

10 De Lara's comments were spoken at the panel discussion New Directions in Documentary Filmmaking at the Cine Acción Festival, San Francisco, October 22, 1988.

11 Ribe also participated in the New Directions panel discussion.

12 For an analysis of East Coast Latino communities, see Xavier F. Totti, "Latinos in New York," *The Portable Lower East Side*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1–2, (1988).

13 For an overview of contemporary Latino cinema, see Eduardo Diaz, *Latin American Visions*, op. cit.

14 Asuncion Horno-Delgado, Eliana Ortega, Nina M. Scott, and Nancy Saporta Sternbach., eds. *Breaking Boundaries* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989). See also, Enrique Fernandez' article on a panel discussion at the Miami Film Festival, "El Norte: Tres Amigos," *Village Voice* (February 28, 1989), pp. 34

15 For discussions of Black British cinema, see, for example, Kobena Mercer, "Recoding Narratives of Race and Nation, *The Independent*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (January/February 1989); Coco Fusco, *Young, British and Black* (Buffalo: Hallwalls, 1988); *Screen*, "The Last 'Special Issue' on Race?" Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer, eds., Vol. 29, No. 4 (Autumn 1988); Reece Auguiste, Jim Pines, and Paul Gilroy, "Handsworth Songs: Interview with Black Audio Film Collective," *Framework* No. 34 (1988); Martina Attile and Jim Pines, "The Passion of Remembrance: Interview with Sankofa Film and Video," *Framework* No. 32/33 (1986); and Jim Pines, "Territories: An Interview with Isaac Julien," *Framework*, No. 26/27 (1985). For more general discussions of race, identity, and cultural information, see Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson/Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1987); Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question," *Screen*, Vol. 24, No. 5–6 (November/December 1983); and Paul Gilroy and Hazel Carby, eds., *The Empire Strikes Back* (London: Hutchinson/CCCS, 1982).

16 See, for example, Zuzana Pick, "Chilean Cinema in Exile," *Framework*, No. 34 (1987), and Coco Fusco, "Long Distance Fimmaking: An Interview with the Cine-Ojo Collective" in Coco Fusco, ed., *Reviewing Histories* (Buffalo: Hallwalls, 1987).

Distribution Information

Ana Mendieta, Fuego de Tierra, Video Data Bank, Art Institute of Chicago, 16 Colombus Drive at Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60603; (312) 443–3793

An Island Surrounded by Water, Black Women, Carmen Carrascal, Diario Inconcluso, From Here From This Side: Women Make Movies, 225 Lafayette St., Ste. 212, New York, NY 10012; (212) 925–0606

Batalla de Vieques, La Operación: Cinema Guild, 1697 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; (212) 246–5522

We're Not Asking for the Moon: First Run/Icarus, 200 Park Ave. S., Ste. 1319, New York, NY 10003; (212) 674–3375

Las Madres, The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Direct Cinema, Box 69799, Los Angeles, CA 90069; (213) 652–8000

La Mirada de Myriam, Cine Mujer, Apartado Aereo 2758, Bogotá, Colombia 283–6593 (Due to shared rights with FOCINE, the Colombian national film production agency, Cine Mujer has not been able to release distribution rights to the film in the United States.)

Not Just Black and White: *AIDS Media and People of Color*

Catherine Saalfield and Ray Navarro

There is currently a proliferation of media dealing with AIDS which has spurred discussions about health care and alternative media production among those engaged in these issues. Due to the loss of so many lives, there is an urgency felt about AIDS matched by outrage at the insensitive response of network television. Independent media producers have been instrumental in bringing about attention to the AIDS crisis, providing critically accurate and culturally appropriate information about the syndrome that mainstream channels have neglected. In this context, alternative media has become an especially crucial activity for critics of the government's mishandling of effective educational campaigns. There is, however, no prescriptive mode of production for AIDS media, although it's generally agreed that what network TV considers appropriate for discussion stands in contradistinction to what activists want to talk about.

For some, the crisis brought about by city, state, and federal neglect of responsibility during the AIDS epidemic has provided the motivation behind their film and video work. Even though they may have no previous experience in film or video production, these activists are not only responding to the absence of appropriate information, but also specifically working to counteract misinformation. For others, the lack of immediate, constant, accurate, and thorough education in their own communities has necessitated making media that does not exclude people based on literacy, income, geographic location, or race. In order to accomplish this ambitious undertaking, those involved in making alternative AIDS media—like AIDS activists in general—recognize the need for educational material designed to address the particular idioms, dialects, and traditions of various communities. Fulfilling this need, however, often challenges definitions of alternative and independent media, since these materials frequently look and sound like conventional mass media productions. No matter how superficially conventional, however, the tapes and films we will discuss here are experimental treatments of sensitive issues. They have been produced on the front lines of community-based AIDS networks by people of color who provide services to their communities.

To issue demands for culturally sensitive materials without taking into account the economic, cultural, and racial obstacles that exist in the independent sector of film and video assumes that people of color will be able to easily overcome such well-entrenched barriers. This expectation

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mirrors the notion that the response of the African-American and Latino communities to the AIDS crisis has been deficient. Both assumptions overlook parallels between the poor access to health care facilities faced by people of color and the lack of access to the means of media production. When asking, "Where are the videotapes from minority communities?" one may as well be asking, "Where are the Black physicians, the Latino dentists?" Representation in this context does not only mean seeing one's body in narratives on the silver screen. It also refers to locating one's body in experimental AIDS drug trials and on the agenda of AIDS prevention policies.

For those with a background in art or film, it's not too difficult to create conventional, realistic documentaries or docudramas. But the community-based films and tapes we discuss here weren't produced by such individuals, nor are they merely the results of an organization being handed a camera rig and told, "Here, represent yourself." Health educator Yannick Durand, audio-visual coordinator for the Brooklyn AIDS Task Force (BATF) and producer of the videotape *Mildred Pearson: When You Love a Person* sees her video work as a product of the crisis. "I'm not a media producer," says Durand. "I am an education specialist, and I choose the video medium out of necessity." Likewise, the crew for *Mildred Pearson* consisted of activists and community workers.

The works discussed here all serve their intended audiences especially effectively and are produced by the staff members of community service centers who then take active roles at screenings of the work, generating discussions about the information they present. Since these works are primarily educational vehicles, the questions they raise are related to their status as alternative media, which is not identical but might overlap with functions of oppositional media. For instance, as landmarks in the field of AIDS educational materials, how do these works differ from government-sponsored AIDS propaganda or mass media AIDS coverage? Given the threat to Black and Latino communities that increased use of drugs poses, can clean needle use be represented both explicitly and persuasively? Given traditional cultural frameworks and sexual stereotypes, can safer sex practices be advocated, and if so, how?

In *Problems in Materialism and Culture* Raymond Williams maintains, "There is clearly something we can call alternative to the effective dominant culture, and there is something else that we can call oppositional in a true sense." For Williams, one of the key issues in cultural analysis is not so much locating which elements of a particular practice constitute a challenge to the existing social order, but rather locating the interrelationships within and between cultural practices and the institutions of their production and reception. He writes, "We have to break from the common procedure of isolating the object and then analyzing its components. On the contrary we have to discover the nature of a practice and then its conditions."[1]

An excellent rebuttal to the treatment—or nontreatment—of sexual relationships and drug use in the mass media is *Se Met Ko*..., made by the Haitian Women's Committee of the American Friends Service, a community organization in New York City that has redirected its programs serving Haitian women and placed AIDS at the top of the agenda. As part of this initiative, they have explored the options presented by narrative filmmaking and media access. This half-hour 16mm film produced in 1988 is designed to strengthen the U.S. Haitian community in light of its stigmatization as an AIDS "risk group" by employing community traditions and myths.

Early in the AIDS crisis the mainstream press profiled Haitians as typical "AIDS victims," along with gay men and IV-drug users. Shots on network news programs of Haitians standing behind fences and dead bodies washing up on Miami beaches established an oppressive field of

images for the world to feast upon. *Se Met Ko*..., then, provides information by counteracting incorrect images that do little more than produce scapegoats. Here the information is contained within the entertaining form of soap opera, complete with neighborhood gossip, drama, and compassionate engagement.

Ojos Que No Ven, an hour-long *telenovela* (TV soap opera) aimed at the Latino community and produced by Adinfinitum Film in San Francisco (with support from El Instituto Familiar de la Raza), similarly depicts a neighborhood's response to AIDS. About two years ago, the number of people of color who were infected with HIV became more widely acknowledged and publicized. At the same time, reports emerged from San Francisco and the Center for Disease Control claiming that the instances of AIDS cases among gay, white men was "leveling off," while cases among Latinos and Blacks (both gay and straight) were increasing. Released in 1987 and designed to be culturally sensitive, *Ojos* plots the progress of *Doña* Rosa, the program's central character who confronts her fear of her son's homosexuality by educating herself about AIDS. In a visit to her neighborhood health clinic, she frankly discusses HIV and homosexuality with a counselor and then conveys this vital knowledge to friends, her daughter, and her neighbors. *Doña* Rosa's educational experience is interwoven with that of other characters who exhibit varying levels of ignorance, fear, and denial about the risks of contracting and transmitting HIV and developing AIDS.

Before the production of *Ojos*, El Instituto Familiar de la Raza was a mental health agency serving Latinos in the Bay Area. The Latino AIDS Project approached the Instituto about collaborating on a theater piece about AIDS, and the *telenovela* form was eventually decided upon as the most appropriate, given its popularity among Latino television audiences. Originally, the piece was budgeted at $10,000, but this figure was increased to $50,000 to underwrite a television production that would adequately convey information using a genre familiar to community members. Indeed, the success of the finished tape—which employs a cast of activists and nonprofessional actors, as well as several professionals—lies in its episodic soap opera format where families respond to the crisis in relation to issues of faithfulness, monogamy, and homosexuality. The program's technical quality can be attributed to the assistance of a professional production company, but the carefully conceived style and content are the result of community involvement and collaboration.

Another example of AIDS educational material made by and aimed at people of color is *Mildred Pearson: When You Love a Person*, which consists of a short account of a Brooklyn woman's experience of the death of her son Bruce. Producer Durand maintains that there are not just color barriers to be dismantled by AIDS educational materials and their implementation, but culture barriers as well. A tape such as *Mildred Pearson* has been an effective vehicle for social change because it appeals to a tradition of storytelling and retains a vernacular and idiomatic use of Black English. Furthermore, it borrows the popular form of a photoalbum, using snapshots to testify to the life of a PWA and his family. Because of this imaginative treatment, the tape addresses a political yet personal sense of loss without sentimentalizing or idealizing. Without compromise it expresses anger at the inadequacies of AIDS care and access to health care for African-Americans. Nowhere is the call to action clearer than in *Pearson*'s reasoned appeal for community support for PWAs and their families who demand improvements in the care given by understaffed and underfunded hospitals. By picturing Bruce, a gay PWA, as alive, vital, loving, and loved by his extended family, *Mildred Pearson* also indicates the ways that "being gay" is treated in different communities.

When discussing community responses to AIDS by people of color, it's important to note that oppositional postures like the gay liberation movement can provoke controversies about assimilation among people of color. As Bell Hooks writes, "Often Black gay folk feel extremely isolated because there are tensions in their relationships with the larger, predominantly white gay community, and tensions created by racism within the Black communities around issues of homophobia."[2] Nevertheless, the traditional Black and Latino leadership has recently adopted some of the methods of activism and community intervention around AIDS —such as guerrilla research and public protests—that have been employed by the white gay community. This counter assimilation is a process whereby traditionally separate communities, defined as separate minorities by the dominant culture, incorporate one another's forms of direct action as political strategy and a means of self-empowerment. One example is El Instituto Familiar de la Raza's coproduction with the Latino AIDS Project, where a subgroup of a cultural minority encouraged its larger community to confront a crisis.

Tapes and films like *Mildred Pearson*, *Ojos Que No Ven*, and *Se Met Ko*... function concurrently as advocacy and sympathetic, seductive narratives. They employ entertaining forms, primarily that of episodic narrative built around dramatic encounters between simple character types or, in the case of *Mildred Pearson*, layers of personal recollections about family relationships. In other contexts, these kinds of productions might be viewed as a merely standard approach to subject matter and conventional storytelling. However, by addressing controversial, often repressed variations of sexual and cultural identities within subcultures, these works situate themselves at the cutting edge of cultural criticism. Countering programmatic hierarchies of race, class, and gender, they realign questions for viewers in terms of issues—not identities.

Another recently produced tape, David García's short *telenovela*, *Alicia*, is aimed at the female sexual partners of IV-drug users (IVDUs). In contrast, *Se Met Ko*... features a woman protagonist who is apparently healthy and emphasizes preventative measures. HIV-positive women like Alicia, the tape's main character, have been grossly unrecognized and underserved despite the prevalence of HIV among them. Within this framework, the tapes examines reproductive rights and HIV concerns for women, but does not treat these questions separately from issues related to race, drug use, or economic dependency. The narrative also addresses perinatal transmission of HIV—from the mother to the baby—during pregnancy. In docudrama sequences where she alternately rages against her husband's carelessness and finds support and camaraderie with her mother, Alicia and her family grapple with her HIV-positive status. By means of this juxtaposition and the narrative it generates, *Alicia* illustrates a breakthrough in confronting the typical sexist patterns in the patriarchal family.

Alicia provides a narrative that encourages viewers to acknowledge and change the conditions of sexism and family trauma. Contesting traditionally oppressive attitudes produced by patriarchal family structures, this type of drama alleviates the sense of isolation shared by those most invisible. To date, no major campaign has been geared toward the female partners of male IVDUs. In this context *Alicia*, above all, must be seen as a service to an otherwise ignored community. In the final segments of the piece, Alicia's woman doctor discusses modes of HIV transmission. Safer sex for lesbians and woman-to-woman transmission are mentioned—another landmark within AIDS media aimed at Latinos and Latinas. Although the tape's melodramatic structure fully employs what are dominant codes of representation available to Latinos, its designated audience—HIV-positive Latina sexual partners of male IVDUs—are called upon to oppose the

oppressive roles assigned to women under patriarchy. The cycle of AIDS misinformation is thus effectively challenged by Alicia, while no apparently radical formal innovations are attempted.

None of the work we have mentioned unconditionally constitutes an oppositional media practice, but all of it has encouraged audiences to respond to discrimination experienced during the AIDS crisis. The reception of *Ojos*, for example, doesn't fit comfortably in any predetermined slot. It was warmly received at the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in Los Angeles, although it was not specifically produced by and for gay men or lesbians. On a festival panel, the tape was represented by its non-gay producer, José Gutierrez, not its gay scriptwriter Rodrigo Reyes. Gutierrez discussed issues of discrimination in the area of language and access to post-production funding and then related this to gay concerns. In New York City, on the other hand, authorities at UHF Channel 47 debated whether the scenes of gay men together were offensive and whether the tape was suitable for broadcast. (Subsequently, they decided to show it in a Spanish-language series on AIDS.) And, at the International Latino Film and Video Festival held last autumn in Manhattan, the tape was given only an early morning screening and thus attracted a small audience. Whereas commercial Spanish-language broadcasting can function as an alternative to English-only TV, it maintains mass media values. On the other hand, *Ojos*, which is unapologetic about its presentation of homosexuality and AIDS, also functions as oppositional media.

Given the complexity of addressing homosexuality *and* homophobia, the effect of producing *Ojos* upon the Instituto as a whole has been unprecedented. As a direct result of the tape's profits and its favorable reception by curators, the organization broadened its activities to include the Latino AIDS Project, which in turn entailed adding gay rights to the roster of issues it dealt with in the Bay Area Latino community.

The emphasis placed upon family values (*familiar* in Spanish means "of the family") and the role of the *barrio* network in supporting PWAs encouraged by the Instituto's programs is reinforced in the coming out story central to the unravelling of plots in *Ojos Que No Ven*. In addition to providing ideological support for the organization's work, the tape has also proven effective as a development tool. Funds raised through tape sales and rentals have allowed the Instituto to expand its counseling, outpatient, food, and clothing support services to PWAs. Because of the tape's effectiveness as a tool for AIDS education, corporate funding for the Instituto has increased manifold, although this money will not necessarily be channeled into future video production.

The Haitian Women's Committee's film *Se Met Ko...* exhibits a relationship between funding and production remarkably similar to that of the Instituto's *Ojos*. *Se Met Ko...'s* director, producer and writer Patricia Benoit worked closely with playwright Harry Kondoleon in order to develop the screenplay. To further the educational purpose of the film, the Hunt Foundation gave the Haitian Women's Committee funds to underwrite the publication of an educational manual to facilitate discussion following screenings of the film. The film's title phrase, *se met ko*, is the beginning of a Haitian proverb which, in its entirety, translates to "the master of the body has control over the body." *Se Met Ko...* directs its didactic messages at men, demonstrating, for instance, how the use of condoms must be a shared responsibility. This emphasis represents a radical move, since women historically have been made to bear the responsibility for birth control and, not surprisingly, are being forced to bear the burden of responsibility for safer sex with men. Thus, this film depicts a sexually active man confronting his denial of risk and learning to discuss sexuality openly with his wife. The

film locates this behavior within a believable set of attitudes and social behaviors, conveyed by joking and teasing among a group of men. A central scene in the film is set in an all-male environment, the barbershop. Some men play dominoes while others receive haircuts, all the while everyone banters about latex and various modes of transmission of HIV. Shot in Creole with English subtitles, the film answers a need in the Haitian community for familiar representations. The producers' choice of genre—as with *Ojos*—was soap opera, which presents scenarios showing the involvement of neighbors and family in the plight of PWAs in a recognizable form.

In the face of AIDS/immigration policies that discriminate against Haitians and Cubans (under the Cuban-Haitian Adjustment Act, HIV-positive immigrants are denied refugee, residency status, or political asylum) *Se Met Ko...* presents daily issues within immigrant Caribbean cultures in the U.S. For example, an early scene shows a nervous shop owner confronting a customer's fear of "AIDS infected" fruit and thereby establishes an opportunity for the lead male character Jean-Louis to suggest preventive health care and HIV-antibody tests. In other scenes, the economic necessity of extended families sharing living quarters places group conversations about AIDS within the intimacy of the kitchen and the bedroom. These and other locations use the spaces of daily life to suggest the need and possibility for detailed discussions of AIDS transmission and its prevention, as well as to portray expressions of insecurity, fear, anger, and compassion. In addition to conveying information to Haitian viewers, the producers intend to counteract racist images of Haitians in the dominant media and allow their community to see themselves.

The treatment of AIDS as a contagious disease in *Se Met Ko...* differs from that in *Ojos* in at least two significant ways. For this comparison, it is important to examine how "homosexuality" is explicitly identified as a mode of transmission in two very distinct cultures. *Se Met Ko...* includes no gay characters. The men in the barbershop scene refer to "massissi," a pejorative term that roughly translates as "queer." Yet, this occurs in the context of a conversation about discrimination toward PWAs and Haitians alike: "Americans give Haitians a hard time. And Haitians give queers a hard time." The parallel construction of this statement is meant to make a point about discrimination, not to offend. As one character points out, "Imagine if you're queer and Haitian!"

Ojos deals with issues of homosexuality more directly but at the same time adheres to an equally specific cultural fabric. In this work gay sexuality is represented by means of cultural stereotypes but then employs these stereotypes to question clichéd ideas about homosexuality. The most explosive example occurs when the tape's main character, community pillar *Doña* Rosa finds her son Manuel making out with another man. The encounter is accompanied by dramatic pounding of Aztec drums and bells. In this semi-comic, semi-serious bit of melodrama, the mother's horrified face is juxtaposed with the equally shocked face of her son. Nonetheless, Manuel continues to appear ambiguously macho throughout the story. For example, he is seen on top of his boyfriend when his mother enters the scene. Although this position does not necessarily makes him the active rather than the passive partner, *Ojos* functions well precisely because it refutes certain social codes having to do with "gayness" while leaving others—like "machismo"—intact.

Another example of *Ojos* ' cultural specificity is the characterization of Joaquín, a bisexual, married man. The extent of his sexual encounters with men remains ambiguous and thus does not upset his macho identity. The inclusion of this character and the dilemma he faces when a former lover notifies him that he has tested positive, emphasizes the necessity for sexual

beings to take precautions and to inform one another of past and present risky activities. The final scene in *Ojos* takes place in a drag bar, where these two men and other characters meet while drag queens lip synch to the salsa tune "Cumbia del SIDA," a song that warns everybody to take precautions—even drag queens. Like the opening of *Se Met Ko...*, which takes place at a community dance, the dance floor functions as an apropos metaphor for sexual tensions that lead to social dramas during the AIDS crisis.

Because of their narrative structures and efforts to educate particular communities about AIDS, both *Se Met Ko...* and *Ojos* assume another challenge: representing PWAs in a manner that does not replicate a sensationalized view of deterioration, loneliness, and romanticized loss found in the mass media, and all too frequently in the art world as well. The treatment of PWAs in *Se Met Ko...* was devised in response to Haitian educators' earlier use of shock tactics, like showing graphic depictions of Karposi's Sarcoma lesions and other external symptoms of opportunistic infections. In such works, these physical conditions are explained to the audience in voiceover narrations delivered by doctors and "other experts." *In Se Met Ko...* the only PWA mentioned is Yves, a man who, as one of his neighbors puts it, "isn't gay or an intravenous-drug user." Yves is never shown, but he is introduced as the patient occupying an ambulance that has arrived to take him to the hospital. This scene of responsive emergency health care presents an optimistic version of the role hospitals could play in the AIDS crisis, as opposed, say, to the realities of waiting four days in emergency room.

Ojos introduces several related issues in a scene where *Doña* Rosa pays a visit to Tomás, a PWA-friend from work, in his hospital room. How does this scene differ from demeaning representations of PWAs, given that Tomás is shown coughing and struggling to stay alive? One important difference is that this section of the tape serves as a demonstration of various ways of communicating with a sick friend. Most effective, however, is the implication that moral judgements are irrelevant and insensitive when dealing with PWAs. Tomás is never identified as either gay or an intravenous drug user (IVDU), since the producers hoped that viewers would then examine their own presumptions about how he became ill.

Documenting and characterizing IVDUs, who may have become infected with HIV by sharing syringes offers another point of comparison between these independent, community-based productions and mass media offerings. The IVDU in the programs made for network TV reports on AIDS is always unproblematically presented as a "risky person," a certain carrier of HIV. This desperate individual, whose identity cannot be revealed, inhabits dark alleys and hunches beside low brick walls—at once seen and not seen. Apparently as an afterthought, a black rectangle is often keyed over the eyes in a coy solution to the sensitive legal problem of showing people engaged in illegal acts.

There are a few tapes produced *for* IVDUs and their sexual partners yet clearly are not made *by* them. One of these, *Needle Talk*, was made by the Department of Health of the City of New York and employs Black idioms, dialect, and a cameo by Dionne Warwick in an attempt to appeal to Black IVDUs. However, this earnest, almost ingenuous, effort to inform people who shoot drugs about modes of HIV transmission does not escape the temptation to marginalize and isolate the tape's supposed audience. After two long recitations by a Black physician and counselor, the viewer hears from a recovering addict whose sorely needed perspective is unfortunately almost subsumed by endless pans of a shooting gallery exterior with people going in and out. Such uncritical use of a surveillance-like techniques within what is an otherwise sympathetic scenario romanticizes urban decay at the same time as it

paints an alienating picture of this environment and the people who inhabit it. *Alicia* also contains a somewhat contrived dramatization to illustrate the connection between drug use and HIV transmission. At the tape's conclusion Alicia's husband Carlos, an active drug user, passes up a hit that his buddy in the gutter (literally) offers him. Although the illustration of needle sharing may be intended to sympathetically represent the danger to addicts, this offer of dope is hardly credible. Addicts don't like to share their drugs.

In contrast, the scenes in *Ojos* involving IVDUs illustrate ways in which male-bonding and sexist attitudes are often reinforced by drug use. Interlocking networks of drug dealing and prostitution are shown as part of a narrative sequence that involves Carlos, a young man who offers cocaine and PCP to his friend Billy, who is then shown how to clean a syringe by a recovering addict, Roberto. Later Carlos goes to his hooker friend Cindy's apartment to sell her drugs, but first teaches her how to sterilize a needle. Despite the severity of her addiction, Cindy appears willing to follow the directions in using *chloro* to clean the needle, which Carlos then rents to her. Though imaginative in its portrayal of community, such scenarios establish a potentially explosive and negative identification for the viewer. Like the barbershop dialogue in *Se Met Ko...*, the challenge remains that of presenting a convincing depiction of changes in behavior, while not violating certain cultural tenets. One consequence of this approach is that ingrained biases may persist on the part of the audience. *Ojos* presents a partial reply to this paradox, by including the recovering addict in the story. Learning to shoot drugs safely implies intervention, a possible bridge to recovery from addiction.

Rodrigo Reyes, the scriptwriter of *Ojos* , has remarked that to assume white intellectuals control the discussion concerning the AIDS crisis or possess the only critique of the health care system misses the mark entirely. These are big subjects; there are varied cultural responses. In an era when film and video are regarded as the primary modes for conveying information, the work we have discussed here functions as ***reinformation***, from the slick TV format of *Ojos* to the home-video quality of ***Mildred Pearson***. Their reception has been mediated largely by the conditions of their production—made as collaborations between existing social service agencies and independents, or by agencies that take up media production. Although these productions have been included in some of the exhibitions of work made in response to the AIDS crisis sponsored by mainstream cultural institutions, they are primarily the results of practical efforts to form alternative AIDS educational networks in the shadow of government inaction. As such, media production dealing with AIDS and undertaken by people of color must be encouraged, not just with approving words but with funding and distribution, but, especially, with opportunities to be seen. ❑

ENDNOTES

1 Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso Editions, 1980), p. 42.
2 Bell Hooks, "Reflections on Homophobia and Black Communities," *Outlook*, Summer 1988, p. 25.

Distribution Information

Alicia: ADAPT, attn. Celeste Derr, 85 Bergen St., Brooklyn, NY 11201; (718) 596–1800
Mildred Pearson: When You Love a Person: Brooklyn AIDS Task Force, attn. Yannick Durand, 22 Chapel St., Brooklyn, NY 11201; (718) 596–4781
Needle Talk: Dept. of Health, attn. Nureen Murphy, 125 Worth St. Box A/1, New York, NY 10013; (212) 566–5012
Ojos Que No Ven: El Instituto Familiar de la Raza, attn. Anne Foster, 2515 24th St. #2, San Francisco, CA 94110; (415) 647–5450
Se Met Ko...: American Friends Service Committee, attn. David Harris, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York, NY 10003; (212) 598–0965

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Puerto Rico:
Hacia un cine nacional

Joaquín (Kino) García

Pocos eventos en la historia del arte han repercutido tanto en el quehacer de una época como el desarrollo y mistificación de la cinematografía, que es el más antiguo de los medios electrónicos de comunicación masiva. A partir de su difusión por toda nuestra América (desde 1896), cientos de millones de personas en nuestros continentes han crecido junto a la imagen grabada en el celuloide que ha dejado un importante legado a nuevas generaciones.

Los procesos sociales y culturales influenciados por los nuevos modos de expresión y que a su vez alimentaron a éstos como en el caso de la obra fílmica ameritan su estudio y comprensión. De igual manera, se hace necesario que el artista que busca expresarse en un medio tan complejo conozca y comprenda las bases que permiten el desarrollo de un arte-industria tan costoso y potencialmente poderoso.

El contacto con la magia de la imagen en movimiento creó unos deseos y expectativas de producir cine que se dieron con distintos resultados en la América Latina de acuerdo a las condiciones materiales y el desarrollo cultural en cada país. Argentina, Brasil y México lograron desde un principio importantes logros en el desarrollo de un cine nacional que reflejaba la propia imagen y la cosmovisión colectiva de esos pueblos. Sin embargo, en ninguno de ellos pudo establecerse plenamente el concepto industrial-comercial que prevalecería en los Estados Unidos. Esto es así en gran medida, obviamente, por condiciones inherentes al propio desarrollo económico.

De cualquier forma, no empece los rumbos que tomara en cada país, el arte cinematográfico comenzó como experimento, explorando nuevos conceptos de forma, estructura, ritmo, movimiento, espacio, tiempo, composición y, más tarde, color. El autoretrato que cada artista en distintas sociedades tuviera de sí, de su pueblo, afectado inevitablemente por el material llegado

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JOAQUIN (KINO) GARCIA nació en San Juan, Puerto Rico. Cineasta y fotógrafo independiente, es autor de *Breve historia del cine puertorriqueño*. Actualmente está envuelto en la producción de *Nicaragua en mi corazón*, sobre las brigadas internacionales, y en la edición de un libro sobre Jack Delano.

■ Everlidis Bustil, protagonista de *Cuando los padres olvidan*.

de otros países—pues el cine logró un rápido intercambio internacional—fué lo que con el tiempo y la continuidad de la producción definió el carácter nacional de cine de cada país, que luego se proyectó más allá de las propias fronteras.

En Puerto Rico la falta de esa continuidad (sobre todo en el cine dramático) y la particular condición política de la isla como colonia de los Estados Unidos afectaron las posibilidades de un proyecto de cine puertorriqueño. Este segundo factor, además de obstaculizar el acceso a mercados internacionales y la apertura hacia el resto del mundo hispano, tiene implicaciones sociológicas-psicológicas. Recordemos que el medio llega luego de la invasión norteamericana al país y que la producción comienza estando en vigencia un gobierno colonial.

■ *Los primeros esfuerzos*

Los primeros esfuerzos en la producción de películas, atribuídos al fotógrafo español Rafael Colorado (ex-militar que peleó bajo la bandera de España en la Guerra Hispanoamericana) y al ponceño Juan Viguié Cajas, comenzaron más de una década después de que el medio llegara a la isla.

Los trabajos iniciales fueron a manera de ensayos fílmicos o cortos noticiosos cuasi-documentales. En el caso de Colorado servían supuestamente para complementar las películas extranjeras que él distribuía en la isla y en el caso de Viguié se presentaban en el cine Habana de Ponce en donde trabajaba como proyeccionista. De este material no queda evidencia por lo que sería imposible pasar juicio crítico a estos esfuerzos. Algo parecido sucede con las primeras producciones formales de las cuales, sin embargo, quedan los títulos y algunas fotos.

Un drama en Puerto Rico (1915) de Rafael Colorado fue posiblemente la primera producción fílmica estructurada en el país. A ésta le siguieron *Por la hembra y por el gallo* (1916), *El milagro de la Virgen* y *Mafia en Puerta de Tierra*. Los títulos nos sugieren un fuerte elemento criollista y variedad temática. Colorado organizó además la primera compañía de producción fílmica, la Sociedad Industrial Cine

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Entrevista

Diego de la Texera y Sandino Filmes

La idea de Sandino comienza en Nueva York, a donde llegué en el año 65 para estudiar una maestría y un doctorado en New York University. Al principio me especialicé en literartura dramática y estando yo terminando la maestría en el 67, abrió un nuevo programa doctoral llamado Drama y Cinema. Yo me pasé de literatura comparada a Drama y Cinema. Como era un programa de teatro, nos daban boletos para ir mucho a Broadway y ver los distintos directores. Ahí comencé a sentir que el teatro era un área muy limitada, con un público pequeño. Un público que tenía que tener mucha plata porque los "Broadway shows" costaban un billetazo en aquella época, me imagino que ahora peor todavía. Me dí cuenta, que si quería decir algo, dentro del teatro.la audiencia era bien limitada. Eso me empezó a preocupar porque estaba metiendo seis y siete años de mi vida en un Ph.D. En eso me empecé a interesar por el cine y me empezó a interesar esa forma; no sólo como alternativa estética, sino como alternativa de comunicación.

Nosotros teníamos dos cosas, primero, una gran desventaja y era que a través de toda la ofensiva de los medios de comunicación norteamericanos en Puerto Rico estábamos perdiendo cada vez más nuestra identidad, especialmente en las generaciones más jóvenes. Segundo, una ventaja era que al ser parte de la colonia y estar

Puerto Rico (SICPR).

De *Por la hembra y por el gallo* y de *Un drama en Puerto Rico* nos quedan dos fotos; la primera confirma el elemento criollista que mencionamos y la segunda, en términos pictóricos se asemeja a cualquier producción de la época, pero en ningún caso es posible hacer una evaluación completa, solo especular. En *El milagro de la Virgen* se explora el tema de la salvación a través de la fe. Protagonizada por María Ascencio y Marieta Picornell, la historia trata de un joven necesitado de dinero (no se especifica el problema) que se arrodilla ante un cuadro de la virgen, siendo tal su sinceridad que la imagen cobra vida y le ofrece su corona de joyas. Muchos años después, Colorado escribió una novela sobre el mismo tema y con ese título, la cual quedó inédita.

A la SICPR siguió la Tropical Films, a la que también se unió Colorado así como los escritores puertorriqueños Luis Llórens Torres y Nemesio Canales. *Paloma del monte*, película de argumento romántico dirigida por Llórens y con Colorado de camarógrafo, fue la más importante de sus producciones. Sin embargo, la primera producción de esta compañía fue un documental de estilo noticioso, *Los funerales de Muñoz Rivera*. Como elemento común en estas producciones parece estar la búsqueda de una temática y una imagen propia que nos identifique como pueblo. No ocurrió así luego en el resto del periodo del cine mudo y tras desaparecer la Tropical por razones de índole económica.

Con la cinta *Sacloir of the Hills* se inició a partir de 1919 un ciclo corto de co-producciones o producciones extranjeras filmadas en Puerto Rico, realizadas con talento norteamericano y dirigidas a ese mercado. Destacan *Amor tropical* (1921) y *El hijo del desierto* (1922), ambas de la Porto Rico Photoplays (compañía incorporada localmente con capital mixto) y la producción de la Paramount, *Aloma de los mares del Sur* (1926). Puerto Rico pasó a ser un paraíso que captaba la atención de un público lejano desconocedor de lo que era la isla y que iba en busca de un escape hacia lo romántico y exótico.

Amor tropical nos revela un gran

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enchufado al sistema metropolitano teníamos acceso a una tecnología con más facilidad que el resto de los hermanos de la América Latina. En ese sentido, encontré que como puertorriqueños teníamos el deber de desatar la guerra ideológica en Puerto Rico con programas de cine y televisión cuyo objetivo fundamental era revertir el signo de la propaganda que sobre nosotros estaban haciendo. Eso era haciendo programas de corte cultural, político, de denuncia que abriera los ojos a la gente con respecto a su propia conciencia y a su propia nacionalidad. En base a eso, con una serie de amigos en NYU, que nos reuníamos para discutir ese tipo de asuntos, les planteé que ninguno de nosotros, tenía manera de poder penetrar en la industria de las comunicaciones. El cine era la única industria que tenía grandes posibilidades de hacer mucha plata para adelantar nuestros proyectos.

Yo planteé que al terminar los estudios nos fuéramos a Puerto Rico y configuráramos un grupo de cine. En ese mismo período, yo me encuentro con la figura de Sandino, que es quizás la figura que más me golpea en el sentido positivo. Sandino es la primera figura de América Latina que vence militarmente a los norteamericanos. A nosotros los puertorriqueños nos habían enseñado que los americanos eran invencibles. Al encontrar la figura de Sandino dije: "Espérate, de este tipo hay que hacer una película y este cuento lo tiene que saber todo el mundo, especialmente en Puerto Rico". El que un puertorriqueño supiera que hubo ya una persona latina que pudo vencer militarmente a los Yankees le levantaría la moral al

lirismo y cuidado en la producción a juzgar por las numerosas fotos que conservamos. Es un drama romántico que gira alrededor del conflicto de dos hombres por una heroína. *El hijo del desierto* o *Tents of Allah* fue una ambiciosa producción de aventuras, filmada en las dunas de la playa de Arecibo y en donde se usaron gran cantidad de extras y recursos. *Aloma de los mares del Sur* está basada en una exitosa obra de Broadway del mismo título y su historia romántica se desarrolla en "una isla del Pacífico Sur".

Luego de ésta surge un vacío, ocupado tan solo por la producción documental de Juan Viguié, quien tuvo su máximo logro en la primera cinta sonora producida en Puerto Rico, *Romance tropical* (1934), que en términos de la historia tiene un parecido a *Aloma de los mares del Sur*. Escrita por el poeta Luis Palés Matos, fue realizada con actores no profesionales y con un bajísimo presupuesto, no empece a ser una cinta ambiciosa. Nuevamente el conflicto romántico está centrado en un joven pobre director de orquesta que se enamora de una muchacha de sociedad. Al ser rechazado por la familia, se va en busca de fortuna, llegando a una isla de los mares del Sur donde se convierte en consorte de la reina del lugar. Ambos tratan de escapar con el tesoro de la tribu, pero la reina muere en el intento y el protagonista regresa a su país con la fortuna casándose con su novia original.

Ese fatalismo romántico, con paradójicos finales felices, se siguió observando en varias películas aún en el periodo de los 60. Mas el rompimiento de la continuidad de la producción no permitió el desarrollo pleno de una cinematografía nacional que reflejara nuestro ser colectivo.

■ *Una expresión nacional: el cine de la División de Educación de la Comunidad (DIVEDCO)*

La continuidad en la producción nacional se dio precisamente en un tercer periodo de la historia de nuestro cine que cubrió de 1946 a 1970. Eje de ese esfuerzo y también su máxima expresión fue el cine de la División de Educación de la Comunidad (DIVEDCO) del gobierno de Puerto Rico, que

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pueblo. De ahí me surge la idea de hacer una compañía de cine que se llamara Sandino, que más tarde produciría una película sobre Sandino.

En 1969 llegué a Puerto Rico para filmar *Adiós Yankee*, mi primer proyecto, que era la historia de la liberación de Puerto Rico. Ahí agarré a algunos de mis amigos, que habían venido de Nueva York a Puerto Rico, entre ellos a Alfredo Matías, Francisco Pabón, y me los llevé a filmar. Empezamos a filmar hasta que llegamos a Culebra—donde había un lío porque los habitantes estaban tratando de sacar la Marina. Cuando llegué allí, me di cuenta que eso era una película en sí. Quizás yo no podía agarrar el proyecto grande, tenía en esos momentos a *Adiós Yankee* en las manos, pero debería ser más realista y hacer una película que tuviera un significado concreto para la lucha de esos momentos. En cierta manera puse el proyecto de *Adiós Yankee* a un lado y le metí mano al de Culebra. Ahí fue que conocí a José García. Fue bien cómico porque yo sospechaba que José era un agente de la CIA y José pensaba que yo era un mercenario, sin conocernos.

Volví a Nueva York. Al graduarme me fui a Puerto Rico, "¡Coño, después que he luchado tanto, tengo que hacer algo, me voy a Puerto Rico!" Terminé la película de Culebra en esos momentos. Esa película se usó mucho para la propia lucha de Culebra, por lo menos para el comienzo. Luego, el Partido Independentista la usó en su campaña política en el 72. Ya yo había podido tener la previsión de haber dicho que esa película la hizo Sandino Films. Cuando regresé a Puerto Rico trabajé unos

utilizó el medio como instrumento de un proceso de transformación más abarcador. Creó un grupo de técnicos, directores, escritores y artistas en diferentes disciplinas que produjo una nueva visión en cuanto al quehacer fílmico. Este cine, que fue puertorriqueñista en su expresión, logró sin embargo trascender los límites isleños y captó un interés internacional que perdura hasta hoy. Entre los directores que surgieron están Jack Delano, Amílcar Tirado, Marcos Betancourt y Oscar Torres.

La DIVEDCO perseguía el propósito de insertar a las masas dentro del proceso democrático y de desarrollo industrial acelerado como parte de una política pública definida. El cine, aunque visto desde esa óptica sería sólo un instrumento más hacia unos objetivos mayores, logró una imagen fílmica nuestra que aún no ha sido superada. Varios escritores que luego adquirirían renombre se unieron al grupo de producción, entre los que figuran Emilio Díaz Valcárcel, René Marqués y Pedro Juan Soto.

La Unidad de Cine se formó siguiendo en parte los patrones de la National Film Board de Canadá, a través de la cual llegó cierta influencia de la escuela documentalista británica. La misma, sin embargo, fue un programa único en su clase, comparable sólo a programas posteriores en Cuba y Nicaragua que siguieron unos patrones similares.

Su obra máxima se logra con el filme *Los peloteros* (1951), su primer largometraje y un clásico de nuestro cine, al que seguirían cintas como *Una voz en la montaña* (1952), *El puente* (1952), *Modesta* (1955), *Cuando los padres olvidan* (1957), *El yugo* (1959), y *El resplandor* (1961), esta última una de las mejores producciones de la DIVEDCO.

Estos títulos reflejan la variedad de temas que se exploraron en las producciones de la DIVEDCO. En *Los peloteros*, filme de gran riqueza visual, el tema de la codicia enfrentada a la honradez se presenta a través de la historia de un líder recreativo del pueblo que junto a un grupo de niños organiza un equipo de béisbol. Los niños le confían a su mentor el dinero

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meses con Tony Rosario en actividades culturales y obras de teatro. A fin de cuentas eso no dejaba plata y la gente no podía sobrevivir con esas actividades. Mi idea de hacer una compañía de cine se impuso y arrancamos a buscar financiamiento para la compañía. En el Banco Popular nos encontramos con un oficial que da la casualidad que era de Lares. Le caímos bien y salimos con $1,500 para comprar la primera cámara. Ese grupo lo componía en ese momento Alfredo Matías, Helen Gordon, Roberto Gándara, Antonio Rosario y yo. Esos éramos los originales del grupo de Sandino Films. Al año se incorporaron Marcos Zurinaga, Luis Collazo y Luis Soto. Posteriormente se integraron Raúl Vélez, Raúl Rivera Martínez, Chino Negretti, y Felipe Borrero. En un momento dado llegamos a ser como 10 ó 12.

Poco a poco comenzamos a trabajar y ahí viene el vínculo con José. Mientras estamos trabajando yo estoy viajando a Nueva York a laboratorios y esas cosas. Y en uno de esos viajes me encuentro con José. Ya había salido su película y había filmado las elecciones del 72 para *Realidades*. Este fue el primer programa que se envió vía satélite desde Puerto Rico. En esta ocasión hablamos muchísimo, nos reímos con las sospechas del uno y el otro. Quedamos en trabajar. En ese momento también hicimos una película, *Don Pedro, la vida de un pueblo*, con Yvonne Soto y Norbert López. Ahí llegó José, hicimos la cuestión de las elecciones. De ahí salió un proyecto en dos partes que se llama *GI José: GI José, parte I*, que era de los veteranos de Vietnam que regresaban a Nueva York y *GI José, parte II*, que era la que yo hice, sobre los veteranos de

ahorrado para la compra de uniformes, pero éste, presionado por su ambiciosa esposa, gasta el dinero en un traje. El drama planteado señala la necesidad de la honradez y el esfuerzo común para lograr los propósitos de la colectividad.

En *El puente* se plantea el esfuerzo colectivo como instrumento para lograr los proyectos que necesita la comunidad. La historia presenta a un grupo de vecinos que unidos logran la construcción de un puente. *El yugo* también plantea esa unidad colectiva, a través del cooperativismo, para lograr los objetivos de la comunidad, cuando un grupo de pescadores se organiza en una cooperativa para la venta de su producto que les permite no depender del intermediario explotador. En *Modesta* se trata el tema, aún vigente, de la liberación de la mujer a través de la toma de conciencia y la lucha por sus derechos. *El resplandor* presenta el tema histórico de la esclavitud en el pasado siglo a través de una historia dramatizada basada en hechos reales.

Estos temas respondían a una política social definida y unos objetivos educativos. Es dentro de este contexto que hay que entender ese cine.

Después de 1968 la producción comenzó a decaer, situación que coincidió con un cambio político en el país al llegar al poder el Partido Nuevo Progresista, un partido de corte conservador y asimilista cuya visión y filosofía no encajaban dentro de los propósitos que hasta ese entonces la DIVEDCO había impulsado. Pero otros factores contribuyeron al desmantelamiento de la unidad de cine, entre ellos el aumento dramático en los costos de producción.

El cine de la DIVEDCO contribuyó no obstante, a sentar las bases de una cinematografía puertorriqueña e inspiró en gran medida un documentalismo de nuevo estilo realizado por independientes a partir de finales de los años 60. Significó además un modelo importante del cine como herramienta del cambio social. En 32 años (1947–79) se realizaron sobre 80 producciones, de las que hemos logrado recoger 72 títulos que dividimos en cinco grupos temáticos. Predominan las cintas de información cultural y/o folklórica (43% del total), seguidas en

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Vietnam que regresaban a Puerto Rico.

En todo este período siempre mantuvimos una misma línea política, de que no había diferencia entre los puertorriqueños de Nueva York y los puertorriqueños de Puerto Rico. Eso era lo que nos ponía en contra de cierta forma con algunos prejuicios políticos que existían en los partidos en Puerto Rico y las organizaciones políticas. Con cierto tono peyorativo le llamaban "Neoricans" a la gente de Nueva York. A nosotros, los que habíamos vivido allá y habíamos combatido juntos con los boricuas de Nueva York, nos daba coraje. Dentro de Sandino nunca tuvimos problemas de ese tipo porque siempre hubo "Neoricans" como Felipe y Luis Soto. Además de haber trabajado con los "Young Lords" para parte de *Adiós Yankee*, yo filmé muchas de las marchas, las confrontaciones con la policía, y los programas de desayuno. Yo principalmente, que ya estaba activo, encontré mi primer fogueo político en Nueva York. De ahí Sandino empezó a funcionar.

Desde ahí José comenzó a mandar trabajos a Puerto Rico. José insistía que se tenía que vincular a Puerto Rico con Nueva York. Nosotros estábamos totalmente de acuerdo y comenzamos un programa de hacer películas para *Realidades*. Se hicieron tres: *GI José II*, *Ochú* que era de un rito de la santería a Ochú, y *Quiñónez va* para *Realidades*. Luego se hizo *Julia de Burgos*, pero ésta no era para *Realidades*.

El programa *Realidades* fue sumamente importante para todos nosotros. Hay una ley federal, según me cuentan, que dice que todas las estaciones públicas de televisión

orden por las que tratan sobre proyectos colectivos o de la comunidad, las de temas del proceso democrático y/o político, sobre música o cortos musicales y un pequeño grupo de cintas sobre temas navideños no incluidos en el primer grupo. Solo dos fueron largometrajes.

■ *En busca de la identidad perdida*

Desde la cinta *Escombros* (1953) del dominicano Rolando Barreras y poco después con la más conocida *Maruja* (1958) de la PROBO films, comenzó un modesto auge en la producción de largometrajes en la isla que alcanzaría, en términos de cantidad, su máxima expresión en los años 60.

Maruja creó en su momento gran expectativa en torno a la posibilidad de realizar largometrajes dramáticos. No obstante, el desarrollo de ese cine estuvo limitado en cuanto a los recursos, los objetivos que perseguía, el eterno problema de la distribución, su falta de autenticidad y la pobre calidad técnico-estética, entre otros. Desde un principio estas producciones utilizaron fórmulas tomadas del incipiente medio de la televisión, influenciado a su vez por los dramas radiales y copiaron además algunos elementos (temas, estilos, etc.) del cine mexicano, con el cual algunos productores locales establecieron una especie de alianza. Abundan numerosas co-producciones con México y en menor grado con España, Argentina y otros países.

A la vez hubo un aumento en el número de películas extranjeras, mayormente norteamericanas, filmadas en Puerto Rico, pero que contribuyeron casi nada al desarrollo de un cine nacional.

Películas representativas de la época como *Tres puertorriqueñas y un deseo* (1961), *Lamento borincano* (1962), *El jibarito Rafael* (1965), *Bello amanecer* (1966), *El alcalde de Machuchal* (1964) y, más tarde en la década, las películas de corte policial que continuarían haciéndose hasta los 70, ilustran el esfuerzo en el cine comercial que por un lado buscaba una expresión puertorriqueña pero que por el otro, imitaba estilos y tendencias que en nada favorecían su viabilidad como proyectos en lo artístico y comercial.

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tienen que tener una programación correspondiente a la demografía de ese lugar. José García, Diana Caballero, entre otros, en 1972, comenzaron a pelear con el canal 13, hasta que lograron tiempo para la presentación de un programa en vivo. La importancia de *Realidades* es que se convirtió en un bastión de lucha, de guerra ideológica, en el canal 13 desde Nueva York.

En cuanto a Sandino Films, poco a poco se llegó al momento en que decidimos entrar a los comerciales. Yo me había empapado de ese mundo de comerciales por dos años. De cierta manera era un mundo, no te lo quiero describir en términos muy negativos, porque hay gente bien chévere trabajando ahí, pero es un mundo bien alienante, bien materialista, un mundo frío y superficial. En Puerto Rico, éste era un mundo dominado fundamentalmente por cubanos (los Guastelas, los Guedes; luego entró en competencia un argentino Che García). Puertorriqueños, de verdad, no había nadie, y por eso también lo tomamos como parte de la guerra ideológica. Nosotros entendíamos que si lográbamos penetrar los comerciales y empezar a incluir elementos nacionalistas dentro de ellos, entonces podríamos de alguna manera subvertir esos comerciales. Poco a poco empezamos a cambiar o a impactar la estética de los comerciales en Puerto Rico. En cierta manera era otro "plus" que teníamos que no habíamos pensado, y yo dije: "Vamos a meterle mano a esto porque además de tumbarle el billete a esta gente para hacer lo que tenemos que hacer, podemos cambiar un poco ciertas cosas".

Ese tipo de cine, con un estilo de telenovela, explotó en ocasiones el paisaje de la isla a manera de folleto de turismo, en otras ocasiones se recostó del sexo y/o la violencia (como en las cintas policiales) que nos llegaban de otras corrientes y en numerosas veces utilizó como punto de atracción las figuras conocidas de la televisión y del cine hispano con las cuales el público tenía una identificación afectiva. El fracaso artístico y comercial de estas producciones mediocres no permitieron que se estableciera una industria de largometraje. La producción decayó de unas 45 cintas en la década de los 60 a tan sólo 15 en la siguiente década.

Pero hablar de cine es hablar también de otras manifestaciones como la producción de cortometrajes de distintos géneros. Es precisamente lo mejor del periodo la producción documental dominada por lo que denominé en un momento como 'un nuevo documentalismo', realizado por cineastas independientes o pequeñas compañías e inspirado por las luchas comunitarias y la efervescencia política del periodo de 1968–75. Destacan en este grupo las producciones hechas por Tirabuzón Rojo, Sandino Filmes y por cineastas puertorriqueños radicados en Nueva York como José García y José Soltero. Su objetivo era un cine populista que buscaba rescatar y proyectar una imagen nuestra como pueblo y manifestar las aspiraciones de sectores populares. Los temas fueron variados pero podemos agruparlos en temas de problemas comunitarios, luchas/denuncias políticas y temas de la cultura.

Ese tipo de documental dio paso a cintas de contenido humanista-cultural, patrocinadas sobre todo a partir de los nuevos recursos que llegaron a través de instituciones como la Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades. La temática varió, pero la búsqueda de una imagen visual auténtica continuó. Hay una línea que se puede trazar entre ambas vertientes que desembocan en los trabajos vistos en la última década, aunque la inquietud social sigue evidente. También enmarcado dentro de un cine populista surge un movimiento, aunque limitado en su alcance, de producciones independien-

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Comenzamos a hacer comerciales y a hacer plata. Sandino empezó a expandirse, nos mudamos de sitio para un estudio inmenso. En ese momento, a la misma vez, comenzaron las contradicciones. Los comerciales como eran tantos, implicaban un trabajo intenso, un trabajo que a mi no me gustaba mucho. Por eso comencé a entrenar, a vender a Marcos como realizador, a vender a Luis como realizador. Poco a poco los fuimos entrenando y metiéndolos en el mercado. Ya teníamos unos dos o tres cuadros. Felipe vendía mucho, era gerente de producción. Luis y Marcos eran excelentes vendedores. Ahí nos íbamos compartiendo las tareas. Sin embargo, los objetivos de Sandino, el hacer un cine más de frente, más político, un cine de largo metraje, hacer la película de Sandino, hacer una serie de películas que teníamos proyectadas, se iban quedando atrás por la vorágine de los comerciales. Cuando tú te metes, es uno detrás de otro. Los muchachos al irse entrenando, iban viendo lo que hacían y querían filmar más para aprender. Se empieza a perder material porque están experimentando y ahí empiezan los problemas económicos. Se estaba trabajando mejor pero el rendimiento que teníamos que religiosamente ganar en los comerciales para poder invertir en esta otra cosa se estaban metiendo en tirar más películas, en hacer los comerciales más sofisticados para impactar más el mercado. Se convirtió en una vorágine donde ya los objetivos no estaban saliendo. Por suerte llegaron una serie de largometrajes. Llegó una serie de televisión que se llamaba *Caribe Force*. Llegó una película de Dino Laurentis que se

tes hechas en super-8, que exploran los géneros experimental y documental. Frente a ellos, el fortalecimiento de una industria publicitaria que crea una infraestructura mínima para la producción cinematográfica, produce una dialéctica que debe llevarnos a replantear el tipo de cine puertorriqueño a realizarse y sus posibilidades.

En estos últimos años y partiendo de la cinta *Dios los cría* (1980) que abre una nueva década para el cine nacional y que fue la primera de una trilogía del director Jacobo Morales, se da un salto cualitativo en la producción fílmica del país. Esta se manifiesta en cintas como *Nicolás y los demás*, *La gran fiesta* y cerrando la década, la exitosa cinta de Jacobo Morales *Lo que le pasó a Santiago* que al ser nominada para un Oscar como mejor película extranjera pone de nuevo a nuestra cinematografía en el plano internacional, partiendo precisamente de una imagen auténtica de lo que somos como pueblo.

Ya convertida en un clásico de nuestro cine *Lo que le pasó a Santiago* refleja el cambio dramático de nuestra sociedad que podemos trazar partiendo de otro clásico, *Los peloteros*, que proyecta aquel otro Puerto Rico distante en el tiempo y el concepto de lo que somos, pero ambos con un elemento en común, la búsqueda de nuestra imagen perdida en espejos falsos, para dejar de ser espectadores y convertirnos en protagonistas. De aquel Puerto Rico rural en el que sólo teníamos miseria para repartir al Puerto Rico de Santiago de una clase media enajenada y sumida en la crisis de su indefinición, solo hemos avanzado un paso en materia de cultura cinematográfica.

La trilogía de cintas de Jacobo Morales establece un estilo visual y unos elementos comunes en las historias, todas del propio realizador y es tal vez el primer caso en el cine de largometrajes que se circunscribe a la teoría del cine de autor. En *Lo que le pasó a Santiago* se refleja la superación y completa madurez artística del realizador que logra un retrato preciso de la clase media urbana puertorriqueña y sus dilemas. La felicidad, planteada como algo semejante a la locura y la opción que tenemos para lograrla, infunde un positivismo auténtico y re-

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llamó *Triumph*. Ahí Sandino se convirtió en una casa de servicio de producción donde forjábamos a los cuadros en esta otra tecnología que era la de hacer largometrajes.

Por otro lado, todas las decisiones de Sandino eran colectivas, pero llegó el punto en que el crecimiento de la compañía hizo inmanejable este tipo de toma de decisión. Yo planteé que necesitábamos una estructura gerencial, similar a la de cualquier compañía. Resultaba imposible reunir una junta de 15 miembros para decidir qué tipo de lápiz se necesitaba. Te estoy exagerando, pero es una metáfora de cómo eran las cosas en Sandino. En un momento dado, vi que estaba pasando lo que había advertido que podría suceder. Es decir, que los comerciales nos podían tragar, como le había pasado a tanta gente.

Nosotros llegamos a negociar, en un momento, casi un millón de dólares al año. Agarramos un buen pedazo del mercado. Hasta el sol de hoy Marcos y Roberto mantienen ese pedazo. Yo siempre planteaba que teníamos que convertirnos en productores de los mejores comerciales y dejar los comerciales baratos para otra gente. El propósito era el concentrarnos en comerciales que dejaran mucha ganancia para poder atender el proyecto de Sandino.

Sin embargo, llegó un momento donde me dí cuenta que lo de Sandino se estaba yendo para otro lado. En esos momentos, dije: "Señores, si ustedes no continúan con los planes estratégicos, yo los continúo y me voy por mi propia cuenta a hacer la investigación para la película de Sandino a Centro América y a México". Hubo una

frescante que se nos resume en su inesperado final. Hay un logro particular muy importante de esta cinta: el desarrollo coherente en el guión. Pero igualmente importante es el logro de esa imagen de lo que fuimos y los que somos. Así quiero llegar a una reflexión final.

Me parece necesario desarrollar un cine puertorriqueño que responda a nuestros intereses y cosmovisión colectiva para, partiendo de nosotros mismos, proyectarnos al mundo tal cual somos como ente colectivo, más allá de los folletines turísticos y de las distorsionadas imágenes que sobre nosotros, otros hacen. Y tal vez acaso, haya un paralelismo con los procesos político-sociales que se gestan en nuestro país.

Pero un cine nacional no surge de la nada; necesita de un esfuerzo concertado y de unas raíces que lo hagan posible. De aquellas primeras cintas que hoy no existen aprendimos, por su ausencia, la necesidad de comprender la importancia del sentido histórico y del estudio de la historia para rescatar por pedazos nuestro quehacer cultural. Precisamente es un objetivo nuestro el motivar una investigación más amplia de nuestra producción fílmica y lograr el establecimiento de una filmoteca y un archivo de imágenes en movimiento.

Como bien señala Arcadio Díaz en el prefacio de *Puerto Rico: Identidad Nacional y Clases Sociales*, "Las expresiones artísticas son respuestas y prácticas a las fuerzas sociales en pugna". Un cine nacional tendrá que responder a esa visión y realizarse dentro de un proyecto histórico. El cine puertorriqueño se encuentra aún en la etapa de proyecto por hacer pero no dudo que en esta época, si se superan sus obstáculos tradicionales, será un proyecto que verá la luz. ❑

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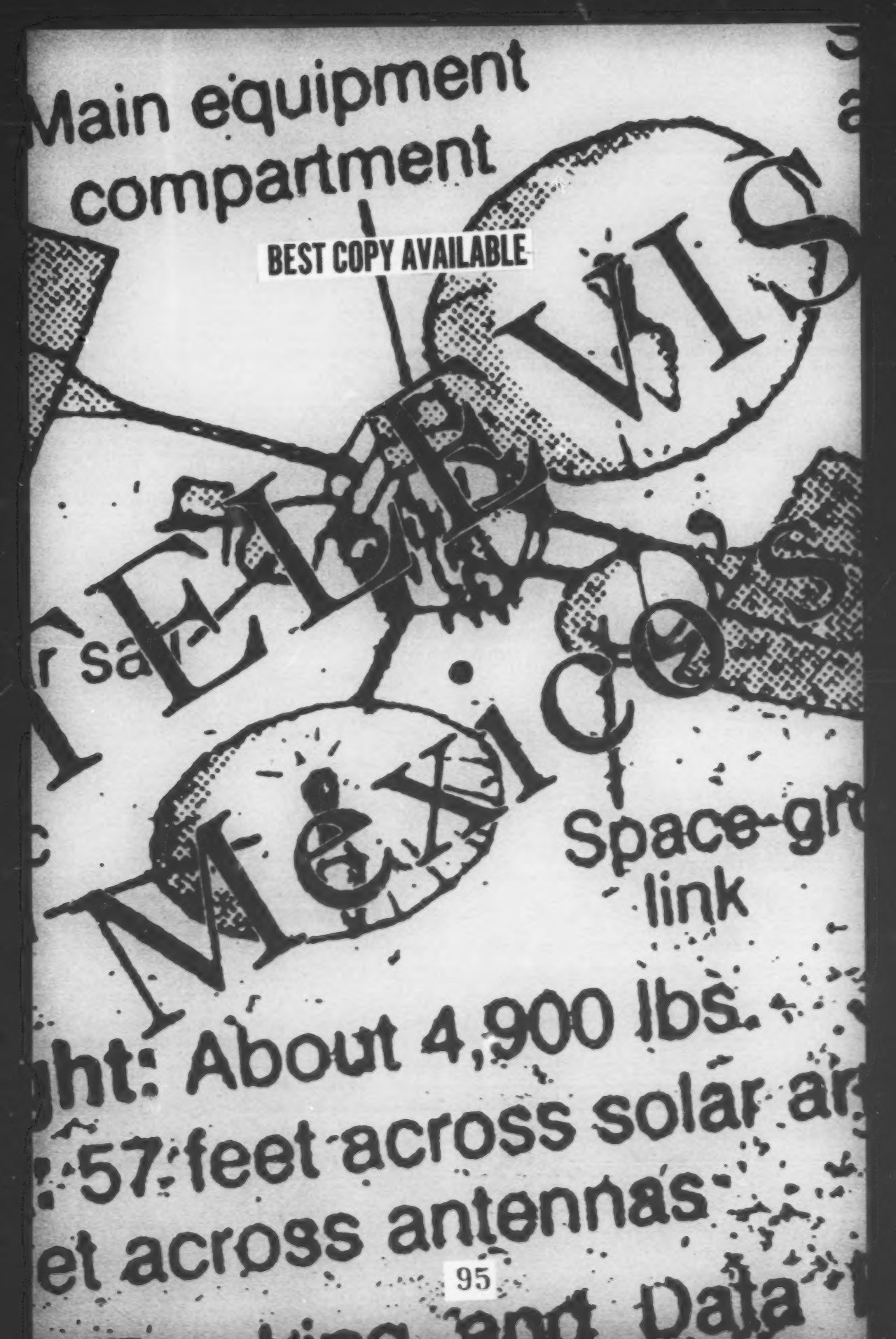
reunión, medio tumultuosa, y en enero y febrero del 76, me fui con una licencia con sueldo para hacer el trabajo para el guión de Sandino. Cuando regresé había tremendo revolú en Sandino. Todo el mundo agarrándose por los pelos. Yo me quedé tranquilo, hablamos de como estaban las cosas. Calmamos los ánimos y nos quedamos trabajando, haciendo trabajos que no llevaban mucha inteligencia y concentrándome en el guión de Sandino. Esto duró hasta que llegó un momento en que surgieron varios incidentes bien feos, personales.

Al surgir estas desviaciones, entendimos que era necesario replantear todo. Nos dimos a la tarea de preparar un documento donde se expresaban los postulados de Sandino y, además, un plan a corto, mediano y largo plazo de desarrollo para Sandino. En éste se incluía el desarrollo de un paquete de películas, el desarrollo de un cine documental, cultural y político. La continuación de un departamento de comerciales, a nuestro entender, era necesario para echarle gasolina al resto de los proyectos. Los comerciales eran un instrumento para llevar una labor política y cultural. Para eso era que nos habíamos fundado, no era para nadie tener plata porque los salarios en Sandino eran socialistas. ¿Cuántos hijos tú tienes, cuánto te cuesta, cuánto pagas de renta, cuánto tú pagas de luz? Tanto para el cine, para vacilar. Eso es lo que tú ganas. Así era, ni más ni menos, siempre fue así.

Versión editada de una entrevista realizada por AURORA FLORES y LILLIAN JIMENEZ en La Habana, Cuba, en 1987.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Campus in Bondage: A 1948 Microcosm of Puerto Rico in Bondage *is Ruth Reynolds' account of the events leading up to and immediately following the 1948 student strike at the University of Puerto Rico. Written in 1950,* Campus in Bondage *is being offered to the public for the first time by the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños. Edited by Carlos Rodríguez-Fraticelli and Blanca Vázquez Erazo. $12*

Ruth Mary Reynolds was born in 1916 in Deadwood, South Dakota. An ardent pacifist, Ms. Reynolds became involved in the Puerto Rican independence struggle in 1943 and was co-founder of the American League for Puerto Rico's Independence in 1946. Until her death in 1989, she dedicated her life to the Puerto Rican cause.

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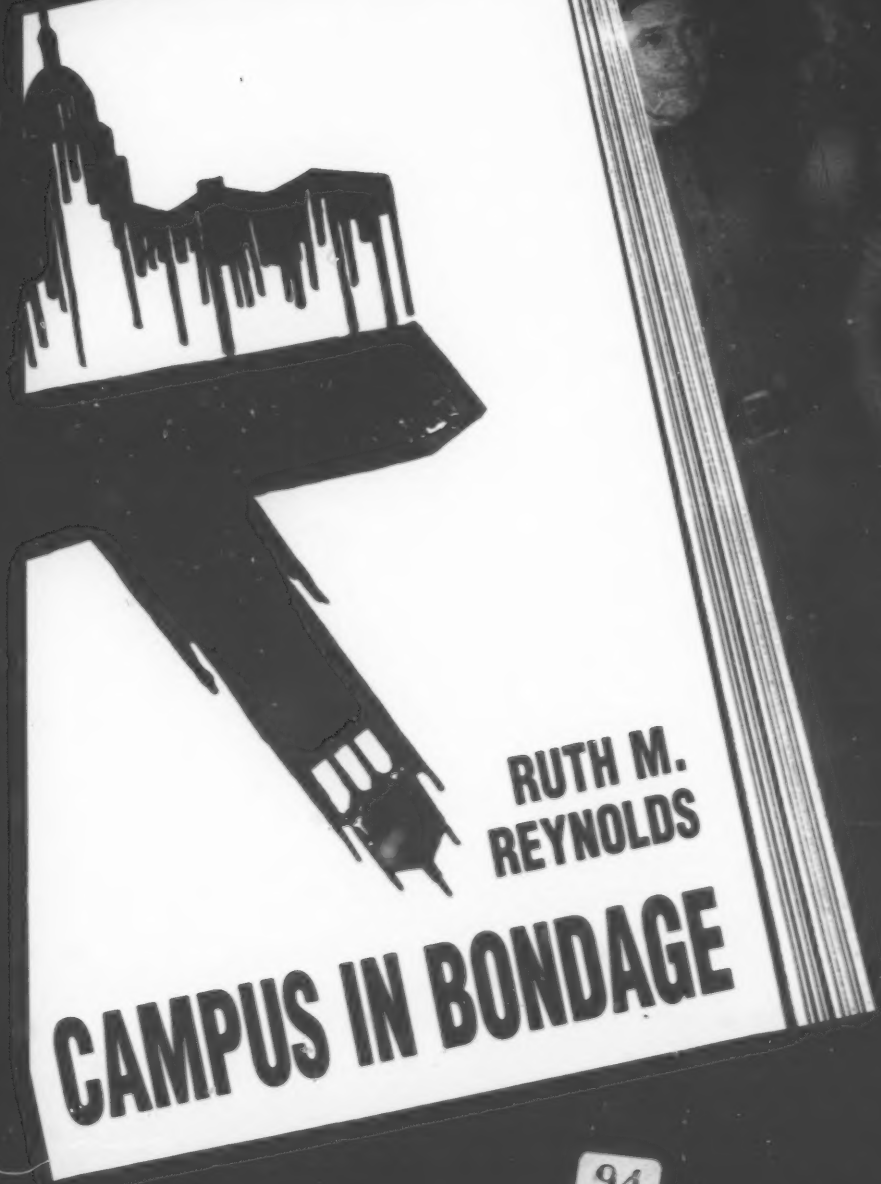

TELEVISA
Mexico's Multinational

John Sinclair

Mexico has never been thought to have great importance in the world television industry, but in fact, the biggest TV network in the world, outside the U.S. is the Mexican corporation, Televisa, followed by TV Global of Brazil.

This article will examine how Televisa developed, revealing a great deal about the forces which have shaped the world television industry today. It will also look at Televisa's position within Mexico, where it plays a crucial economic, political and cultural role in binding Mexico to the transnational capitalist system. Finally, we shall examine Televisa's activities in the United States, where it has been the major force in the development of Spanish-language television.

The controling shareholder of Televisa is the Escarga family, which owes this position to the dynasty's founders having entered radio broadcasting at the ground floor level in the 1920s. Raúl Escarga, at the suggestion of a U.S. Army colonel and Ford dealer whom he had met through his automobile and radio sales businesses, was trained in Texas in radio transmission by the U. S. Army. He returned to Mexico City to open up its first commercial radio station. Raúl's brother, Emilio, also educated in Texas, entered the radio sales business. An affiliate of RCA supplied the capital for Emilio to open his station. This was soon built up into a chain which came to dominate the Mexican radio industry, and lay the foundation for the Escargas' commercial success. Emilio later opened up a second radio network, this time obtaining the capital from CBS. The combination of Mexican entrepreneurial opportunism with U.S. technological know-how and capital established the formula for the media development which was to follow, particularly because it employed the U.S. commercial broadcasting model of selling to advertisers.

By 1931, a U.S. Department of Commerce report said, "The radio audience in Mexico now learns of the qualities of American life." An American insecticide will free their kitchens of roaches, *las cucharachas*; the Central Mercantile has the best bargains in ladies' hats; a Talking Machine Hour is sponsored by the Mexican Music Company (RCA); that Agela and Buentono cigarettes are as good as any imported brand; that a well-known automobile is the car of their dreams—"Have You Driven A Ford Lately?" and many other statements, which by repetition, cannot fail to build up a preference in the minds of consumers.

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A late entry to the radio business was Romeo Oferal, who launched himself into radio as well as newspaper and magazine publishing after 1947. He became associated in these and other ventures with Miguel Alemán, who was president of Mexico at the crucial stage in which all these interests were jockeying for position in anticipation of the introduction of television.

Emilio Escarga organized a lobby group of Latin American radio broadcasters dedicated to making sure that their various governments would adopt the commercial rather than the state-run model for television. Alemán established a Presidential Commission to recommend which model Mexico should adopt, but his mind was already made up. In 1950, Alemán's Presidential decree opened television to commercial interests, including his own. The first licenses were granted to Oferal, then Escarga and later, a member of the Presidential Commission, González Camerina.

But television wasn't the bonanza that these entrepreneurs had thought it would be, at least not then. The market was too small to support three channels. For instance, Escarga had to get back some of the money he invested in production facilities by charging the audience admission to see live productions. He also began to export programs, which was to have a much more solid future than selling tickets.

The tactical solution to this problem was a three way merger in which González Camerina was rapidly forced out, thereby establishing a monopoly. On this basis, the available market could be expanded in territory, segmented into distinct audiences, and shared between the major owners. This new company, formed in 1955, was called TeleSistema Mexicano, or TSM. Even so, it was not until the 1960s before Mexican commercial television really became profitable. Prior to this, however, several pre-conditions had to be met: the formation of a solid block of large scale advertisers and the sale of commercial spots through advertising agencies, replacing the old system of direct sponsorship of programs. By the end of the 1950s, companies such as Procter & Gamble, Westinghouse, Kraft, Coca Cola, Sears Roebuck and Nestle were well established in Mexico. Soon after, U.S. advertising agencies started setting up branch offices in order to capture the business which this transnational expansion was generating.

The stage was set for a decade of growth in the Mexican television industry, both in the size of the audience and in its technical capacity. Once video tape became available, for example, program production for export could be increased greatly. In 1962, TSM set up a new production company with the help of a 25 percent investment from the U.S. network ABC. This company specialized in the production of *telenovelas*, a kind of Latinized soap opera which has since become the mainstay of Spanish-language programming throughout the Americas.

By the end of the 1960s, however, TSM faced competition, especially from a new channel owned by the Grupo Monterey, a major industrial consortium. Also, the government was seeking to gain a foothold in the television industry, going so far as to begin its own national commercial network. In these circumstances, once again, a merger took place. This time, the Escargas, Oferals and Alemáns joined forces with the Monterey group to form Televisa. Even more than under TSM, the Televisa audience became segmented in accordance with the type of programming each channel offered. Thus, Channel 2 is the national channel, fairly mixed in programming, but with a bias towards middle-class families. Channel 4 broadcasts *telenovelas* to women and sports to men in the Mexico City area. Channel 5 provides U.S. series, cartoons, sports and films to younger people throughout central Mexico, and Channel 9 broadcasts in the Mexico City area, but is a non-commercial channel. This enables Televisa to be seen as providing

quality cultural programming without it getting in the way of making money on the other channels.

As well as being the dominant television broadcaster in Mexico, Televisa is a major producer of programming. It produces two thirds of what it shows. Furthermore, these programs are exported, not only to the Spanish-language TV stations in the United States and other Latin American countries, but also to other parts of the world.

While most of its activities are in the television industry, including cable as well as network TV and TV production, Televisa is also involved in other media industries. Radio is still operated by the old Escarga networks. It has various ventures in print, separate from Televisa, including the important newspaper and magazine interests of the Oferals and Alemáns. In film, it has active production companies, making both feature films and cartoons. It also has music publishing and recording companies, and runs a dubbing operation. Televisa claims that over 60 percent of the U.S. films and series circulating in Latin America have been dubbed in their studios.

Beyond the field of media, Televisa has promotion companies for shows and sports. It owns a football team and stadium. It has a cultural foundation and art museums. It is involved in real estate, executive jets and tourism, and runs a sophisticated market research organization. Televisa is a key economic power. More than a business, Televisa is an institution, with considerable political and ideological power in Mexico.

The assassinated Mexican journalist, Manuel Buendia, called Televisa "*el quinto poder*," the fifth power that is, after the press, the so-called, "fourth estate." That is also the title of a book of critical essays on Televisa which can be bought anywhere in Mexico, so great an interest do Mexicans have in Televisa. The Mexican intelligentsia loves to hate Televisa, even though Televisa is trying hard to win them over with its cultural channel, its art museums and its promotion of selected intellectuals of the center right. At a popular level, Emilio Escarga Milmo and Miguel Alemán Velasco, the sons of the founding fathers, are two of the richest men in Mexico, and national figures. Televisa enjoys an almost mythical status. As an institution, it has greater popular trust, or legitimacy than the government. The government is acutely aware of this, and although Televisa's leaders are in declared support of the ruling party, Televisa's interests are not always the same as the government's. There is always a competition for the hearts and minds of the people, and Televisa is winning.

But to really understand Televisa's position in Mexico, it must be seen within an international perspective. Its power ultimately rests on its capacity to attract various audiences, which it can in turn sell to advertisers, most of whom are transnational corporations. Studies vary, but approximately 65 to 75 percent of prime time advertising, which is the most expensive, is bought by transnational corporations such as Pepsico, General Foods, Warner Lambert, Kellogg, Levy Strauss, Playtex, Kimberly Clark, General Motors, Ford and Phillips. Although there are some major Mexican advertising agencies, the agencies getting the largest share of the business are foreign, primarily U.S.-based companies, such as McCann Erickson and Young & Rubicam. Although British companies have in recent years acquired certain former leading U.S. agencies such as J. Walter Thompson, advertising is predominantly a transnational business and its biggest clients are transnational corporations.

Televisa serves these transnational interests by assembling the audiences with the demographic characteristics which the advertisers want. Televisa in turn sells the audience to the advertisers, with the advertising agency acting as a broker. Televisa is truly what one media critic has called, "a consumer delivery enterprise."

Even by U.S. standards, television in Mexico has been commercialized to

an intense degree. Television is more widespread and accessible than might be expected in a poor country. Market researchers claim that over 75 percent of Mexican homes have television. Also, for a poor country, there is a lot of money spent on advertising. Along with Brazil and Argentina, Mexico leads the Third World in the absolute amount of money spent on advertising each year. Most of this money goes to television. For the last 10 years, up to 75 percent of the total amount of advertising expenditures in Mexico has gone to television. That is about half the proportion spent on network tv in the United States. Televisa collects more than 90 percent of what is spent on tv advertising.

Another measure of commercialization is the amount of advertising that is shown. Government regulation allows 18 percent of broadcast time, but this can be averaged out. So in prime time you may be seeing up to one hour of advertising for every three hours of viewing. Therefore, Televisa's wealth and power at the international level comes from the role it has assumed in the perpetuation of Mexico's economic and cultural dependency. This is acheived through its ability to deliver Mexican audiences to transnational advertisers.

■ *Spanish-language television in the U.S.* Although Televisa's operations have been strongly centralized in Mexico City, for more than 25 years, Televisa and its predecessors have dominated the development of Spanish-language television throughout the United States. This began when Escarga Sr., the *Don* as he was called, sent his young export executive, René Anselmo, to the United States to sell Mexican television programs. When the U.S. networks showed no interest, Escarga decided to set up his own tv stations. However, the U.S. Communications Act does not allow foreigners to own more than 20 percent of a television station. They can own networks, but not the actual broadcast outlets. Escarga then entered into partnership with employees and associates of Televisa who were U.S. citizens, which included Anselmo. In 1960, they acquired stations in major Hispanic cities in the name of the Spanish International Communications Corporation (SICC). In 1961, another company, the Spanish International Network (SIN), was formed to supply the stations with programs, and to sell advertising time. Rene Anselmo was made president of both SICC and SIN. Later in 1971, he was given a 25 percent share in SIN. The majority share was owned by Escarga himself, who died in 1972, the same year as Televisa was formed. Televisa then took over controlling interest.

SIN did not make a profit for the first seven years and SICC was continuously in debt. Escarga Sr. had carried SICC's losses by letting it defer the payments which it owed to SIN for the programs SIN supplied as Televisa's agent. But the Escarga, Alemán and Oferal offspring, the new Televisa triumvirate, called in the debt in 1975. In the arrangements made to refinance SIN, Anselmo was opposed by SICC partner and Chairman Frank Faust, another Jr. Faust brought a civil lawsuit against Anselmo, opening up the affairs of SIN and SICC to the Federal Communications Commission. As a result, two things became clear: that SIN's eventual profitability had been achieved at the expense of SICC. For example, SIN would charge SICC for programs which were never supplied. Also, that the whole SIN/SICC operation had been run like a feudal hacienda with Don Emilio as the *patrón*, and Anselmo, acting as what the Mexicans call a "*presto nombre*," a borrowed name or what the FCC later called, "an agent for foreign control."

But, if the business practices of SIN and SICC were rather traditional, their use of available technology was highly innovative. SIN was the first network to exploit the UHF band, interconnect all of its stations via satellite, make commercial use of low power television, and the first to be carried by cable providers. In this way,

SIN extended its web until by 1986, it was claiming 409 outlets which reached 82 percent of Hispanic households, potentially 15 million viewers.

The capacity which the satellite gave SIN to deliver a national audience of Hispanics, also began to attract big national advertisers, such as Procter & Gamble, Levi Brothers, Budweiser and McDonalds. As Hispanics were cultivated as a market, much of their advertising material took on a distinctly Hispanic cultural orientation.

Once the satellite interconnect system was put into place in 1976, SIN's profits began to grow at the rate of 25 to 30 percent each year. However, the FCC and the civil court investigations, concluded in 1986, ruled that the SICC stations had to be sold. This meant the end of Televisa's monopoly over the Spanish-language tv market, and a major shake up in the industry. Even before the FCC decision, a major new market entry had been made. It came from Wall Street. An investment company called Reliance Capital bought a Los Angeles Hispanic station in 1985. Since then it has acquired stations in Miami, New York, Puerto Rico and elsewhere. Calling itself Telemundo, it is shaping up as another national Hispanic network, catering more to East coast Cubans and Puerto Ricans. Although Reliance made a bid for the SICC stations when they were put on the block in the middle of 1986, Escarga Jr. was able to make sure they went to a friendly bidder. Hallmark Cards, which operates a worldwide greeting card and stationary empire from Kansas City, bid for the SICC stations in conjunction with another investment company, First Capital of Chicago. These mid-western Anglo capitalists made a deal with Escarga, in what one financial journalist approvingly called, "a brilliant, opportunist move." They agreed, among other things, to continue to allow SIN to provide programs and sell advertising for its old stations, enabling Escarga to maintain the status quo for Televisa.

This deal was to last two years, by which time we can expect a more permanent liaison to form between Anglo and Mexican capital. Objections made by Hispanic groups against the sale, on the grounds that Spanish - language tv should be owned by Hispanics, have not prevented the FCC from approving the deal. Since then, Televisa has regrouped its forces in the United States. Under the corporate umbrella of Univisa, SIN has been reborn as Univision. Satellite development has been put in the hands of John Gavin, former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, and friend to both Escarga and Ronald Reagan.

A consolidated corporate effort is being made by Televisa to increase its international activities and hence its dollar income. Televisa might have lost the monopoly it held for so long, but it still maintains a stronghold on the U.S. market. With its new look, Univisa will continue to deliver U.S. Hispanics as a commercial market, the sixth largest, and relatively, the richest in the world. ❑

Cultura y grupos populares en la historia viva de Puerto Rico hoy

Lydia Milagros González

"Nuestra identidad está en la historia, no en la biología y la hacen las culturas, no las razas, pero está en la historia viva."

Eduardo Galeano [1]

Dedicatoria: A Rafael Cortijo, Ismael Rivera, Willie Colón, Ray Barretto, Eddie y Charlie Palmieri, Tito Puente y a tantos otros que vivieron estos años de crisis, e hicieron de ellos materia viva que hoy nos nutre a todos.

■ *Calentando los tambores*

Es usual entre los tocadores de tambores en los bailes de bombas en Puerto Rico, afinar los cueros antes de iniciar una sesión, mientras los espectadores, cantadores y bailadores se van organizando a su alrededor y acomodando el oído a los sonidos que guiarán sus pasos o voces al comenzar este encuentro de la comunidad. Los bailes de Bombas, de obvias raíces africanas, nacidos en las antiguas haciendas azucareras y cultivados en sus casinos por negros libres que vivían en los pueblos y eran refinados trabajadores diestros o artesanos como eran llamados en el siglo pasado, son cada vez menos frecuentes en Puerto Rico hoy; pero esta estrategia de buscar con los sonidos las claves para comenzar a acercarnos a una realidad compleja, sirve también a nuestro propósito ahora. Queremos comunicar una serie de procesos que están ocurriendo en nuestro país y cuyo análisis conlleva examinar desarrollos sociales, económicos, políticas culturales, integrando además las observaciones y vivencias acumuladas por años sobre este movimiento cultural popular amplio que está ocurriendo en el país. Sin embargo, hay que aclarar que estamos conscientes que el problema de hacer análisis cultural como el que ahora pretendemos realizar es casi una misión imposible. Es tratar de entender la vida misma, por lo cual uno está condenado a no lograrlo, pero necesariamente a intentarlo.

Puerto Rico es, a la altura de 1990 una colonia de Estados Unidos, pero entender sus particularidades puede llevarnos más alla de los límites de este trabajo, aunque esta realidad permea cada una de las líneas aquí escritas . Más aun, escribir este trabajo es uno de tantos intentos que continuamente los colonizados tenemos que afrontar, angustiados por una persistente sensación de que no nos conocemos. Tratar de ver y construir una interpretación de nuestra realidad, que se da en la vivencia de modo fragmentado, que se vive a ciegas, quizás no sea exclusivamente una experiencia para los colonizados, pero sí de muchos de ellos. Al menos podría testimoniar que uno de los procesos ..nás explosivos para quien

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suscribe estas líneas ha sido ir recomponiendo a través de mi propia historia como ser social, la de mi país. El conocimiento histórico ayuda a sanar este sufrir.

Describiremos ciertas experiencias que quizás nos den la clave para acercarnos y ver en algo el mencionado movimiento cultural, a la vez que testimoniaremos nuestras inquietudes. Trataremos de ver, además de los procesos, los actores que han insidido en este movimiento cultural que se está desarrollando en gran medida, por gestión comunitaria.

No sólo en Puerto Rico la preocupación por la cultura y el quehacer cultural ha crecido en las últimas dos décadas de manera inusitada, está sucediendo también en el resto del Caribe, Centro y Sur América. En nuestro país específicamente se han multiplicado las actividades de tipo cultural generadas, tanto por instituciones gubernamentales, como por grupos comunitarios, grandes empresas comerciales y/o industriales. Todo esto ha propiciado un debate sobre el tema, el cual ha producido mucha discusión informal dentro de los grupos y entidades que insiden de alguna manera en el proceso, pero pocos trabajos de investigación y análisis formales.

Trataremos de describir y analizar lo que muchos vimos comenzar en los años 70, cuando numerosos maestros, ex-activistas políticos o sindicalistas, desilusionados de la gestión político partidista y profundamente intrigados por la renuencia del pueblo a apoyar los proyectos de independencia política no empece el sentido afirmativo de su puertorriqueñidad, deciden dirigir sus energías hacia el campo cultural.[2] Como veremos ellos no fueron los únicos, pero a todos les preocupaba la cultura y nación puertorriqueña. Otros elementos y procesos de igual o más importancia influyeron en el desarrollo de este movimiento, tales como los procesos históricos de cambio y desarrollo urbano que comienzan en los años cincuenta y que, a nuestro juicio, llegan a un tipo de culminación en los setenta; las políticas culturales del Estado para la promoción cultural, las cuales también se inician a mediados de los años cincuenta con la instauración del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (1955); y para la misma época, la inserción de los medios de comunicación en la difusión y reproducción masiva de algunas expresiones de nuestra cultura. Examinar estos elementos, sin pretender abarcarlo todo, para tratar de recomponer la naturaleza de ese fenómeno cultural que estamos viviendo, es parte de lo que nos proponemos en este escrito primerizo que a su vez pretende rescatar de la memoria vivencias acumuladas en los últimos años.

Nos parece pertinente añadir que este movimiento cultural forma parte de uno más amplio, de naturaleza civil, pues en Puerto Rico también se está dando simultáneamente el fenómeno del surgimiento de otras pequeñas organizaciones de base, religiosas, artesanales, feministas, de producción, anti-nucleares y ambientalistas, dirigidas a afrontar diversos problemas y a tratar de generar respuestas, que no se están dando a nivel del Estado. Incluso algunas propuestas que surgen de estos grupos retan al Estado mismo, tales como las luchas ambientalistas y anti-nucleares por mencionar las más obvias. Aun dentro de su fragilidad y fragmentación, todo este movimiento es índice de cambios importantes que están ocurriendo y caracterizan la sociedad puertorriqueña hoy, lo cual nos obliga a plantearnos ¿de dónde y cómo han surgido estos cambios?

Hace unos treinta años, por ejemplo, el tema de la cultura era parte de la actividad y discusión de sólo ciertos sectores sociales, actualmente lo es de sectores más amplios (profesionales, trabajadores de servicios, estudiantes, etc.) que, a partir de sus propias preocupaciones y nociones sobre la cultura y sus problemas y/o sobre qué debe o no hacerse para su desarrollo, han organizado una multiplicidad de grupos dedicados a promover la actividad cultural y "a defender la cultura puertorriqueña".[3] Esta nueva y numerosa actividad cultural gira, en su mayoría, alre-

dedor de lo que llamaríamos expresiones de la cultura popular, en contraposición con la actividad cultural que antes prevalecía. Esta era la promovida principalmente por—o que era del interés prioritario de—los sectores dominantes del país y que por lo tanto podríamos llamar la cultura según era entendida y practicada por esos sectores sociales. El sólo hecho de que actualmente se conceptualice a estas expresiones populares como "cultura" ya marca otro de esos cambios. Nos encontramos pues, ante un fenómeno donde decenas o quizás centenares de grupos comunitarios entre otros, están propiciando una variedad de actividades: tales como las de auto-educación (talleres, charlas, seminarios sobre distintos aspectos de la cultura, como de aprendizaje y práctica de música, artesanías,etc.) hasta unas mucho más complejas como son: la organización de festivales, mercados de artesanías, fomento de la venta de comidas criollas, entre otras.[4]

Toda esta actividad ha tenido un impacto, no sólo en la conciencia de nuestra sociedad en general, sino que se ha transformado en un "issue" político abierto para los partidos. Hecho notable si recordamos que con la excepción de los independentistas, los otros sectores políticos del país se mantenían helados ante cualquier cosa que sonara a cultura. Un ejemplo de lo antes dicho, (contradictorio al menos para muchos puertorriqueños) es leer las promesas de la plataforma del principal partido pro-anexión, Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP). De lograrse la integración de Puerto Rico a los Estados Unidos como estado, aseguran ellos que nuestro pueblo conservaría el idioma español, la cultura y la autonomía deportiva. Con lo cual comprueba éste (y también otros partidos que han mostrado recientemente preocupación sobre la cuestión cultural en nuestro país) la importancia que le ven a dicho asunto, como uno decisivo electoralmente. Así se ha sumado este elemento al discurso político manejado por todos los sectores del país, y nos ayuda a entender la importancia que el tema ha cobrado. Además, ha contribuído, con todo y las críticas que uno pueda hacerle, a exponer más ampliamente el debate a sectores que usualmente no participaban en este tipo de discusión.

También han colaborado a este tipo de difusión, sin proponerselo, los medios masivos de comunicación manejados por los intereses comerciales a través de las casas de publicidad. Ellos se percataron, desde esos mismos importantes años 70 que "la cultura vende" y vende bien. A partir de esos años, proliferaron los anuncios que utilizaban como contexto para la venta de diversos productos, (incluso ¡claro!, los norteamericanos) elementos de nuestra historia, cultura y contorno natural. Quizás esto sea producto de que esas casas publicitarias acogieron a muchos puertorriqueños de tendencias independentistas entre su equipo de trabajo. Probablemente algunos de ellos canalizaron por este medio de comunicación masiva mucho de su discurso frustrado y/o su deseo de contribuir en algo a la afirmación de lo puertorriqueño.

Ahora bien, si los partidos y casas publicitarias apelan constantemente a estos elementos de identificación cultural para lograr sus propósitos, lo hacen porque existe una necesidad muy amplia y profunda en el pueblo de hacer valer, ejercitar, conocer, etc., sus propios valores culturales, que las casas publicitarias explotan a su favor. Nos guste o no, éstos se han vuelto un medio para que las masas conozcan (o mal conozcan) aspectos de nuestra historia y valoricen expresiones de nuestra cultura, en una situación donde a nivel amplio popular no existía quien llenara esa necesidad. Han contribuído a su manera a desarrollar una imagen visual y auditiva, de quiénes y cómo somos. Esto ha generado una especie de "gusto por nosotros mismos" y nuestras cosas o manera de ser que, creemos, forma parte de este fenómeno. De hecho lo que uno puede observar ingenuamente a través de los años y los anuncios es que cada vez más se refuerzan "maneras de ser o expresiones

a lo puertorriqueño". En un sentido, así se han ido puertorriqueñizando algunas cosas de origen extranjero, aunque su objetivo de estimular el consumo plantea serios problemas sobre el verdadero alcance de esa "puertorriqueñización".

Las observaciones críticas al buen o mal uso, o a la manipulación que le dan los partidos políticos y las casas publicitarias a "la cuestión cultural" es muy amplia, pero sirvan estos apuntes para ir entendiendo de cuantos elementos se ha ido nutriendo este movimiento cultural.

Varias preguntas pueden hacerse alrededor de este fenómeno, entre ellas: ¿cómo y cúando surgió esta tendencia? ¿cómo podríamos describir este proceso? ¿cómo ha llegado a extenderse tanto y formar parte de una preocupación y discusión cotidiana, amén de la tradicional entre sectores intelectuales y/o grupos particulares políticos? ¿cómo interpretar la presencia cada vez más dominante de estos sectores amplios? ¿qué ideas sobre la cultura se están manejando, o cuál es la naturaleza de esa gestión cultural que se ha estado desarrollando? ¿Significa este aparente proceso de reafirmación cultural de los sectores populares un proceso de fortalecimiento a nivel de lo nacional? y ¿qué puede esto significar en el Puerto Rico de hoy, próximo a celebrarse un plebiscito donde el pueblo puertorriqueño debería decidir finalmente su status político, es decir, votará por la independecia; estadidad o anexión definitiva con los Estados Unidos; o por la continuación del particular status colonial, que se ha conocido por Estado Libre Asociado?

Este trabajo lo sometemos a manera de propuesta que facilite el comienzo de una discusión más sistemática sobre los procesos de índole cultural que están sucediendo en Puerto Rico. Pretende además, organizar de un modo un poco más coherente parte de una historia nunca escrita sobre el mismo. Además, se basa en la observación que con mayor intensidad desde hace unos quince o veinte años hemos mantenido algunos interesados e incluso militantes mismos de las luchas culturales en el país. De modo que podríamos adelantar que este trabajo está escrito más desde el punto de vista de los actores de toda esta historia. Pretende resumir también, la información y nociones que se han venido discutiendo informalmente en el seno de esos grupos culturales y/o entre algunos intelectuales.

■ *Descubrimiento #1— la cultura es importante*

Con el grito de ¡cultura! inicia su espectáculo uno de los grupos de música popular más representativos de esta nueva tendencia: Los Pleneros de la 23 Abajo. "Loíza es importante" explicaba un chamaquito negro y de barrio refiriéndose al pueblo en que vivimos, "porque tiene cultura" aclaraba. Aseveración sorprendente si pensamos que hace poco más de treinta años todavía se discutía a nivel gubernamental si podía o no hablarse de una cultura puertorriqueña como tal.[5] Peor aún, hace apenas unos ocho años el entonces presidente del más importante centro docente del país, la Universidad de Puerto Rico, describía burlonamente a nuestra cultura con frases peyorativas.[6] Ni pensar en ese debate y momento de darle categoría de cultura a las expresiones de los sectores populares. Estas, en el mejor de los casos tenían un espacio apretado o subalterno, en el discurso que de alguna manera tenía que referirse a ellas. Pertenecían, se explicaba, a esa categoría llamada folklore. Con lo cual se entendía que eran expresiones acumuladas por el genio popular y representaban la esencia misma del pueblo (de donde derivaba todo su prestigio). Por eso mismo, eran calificadas como tradicionales y se alegaba que se mantenían inamovibles en el tiempo. Pero el niño negro de barrio que me explicaba la importancia que tiene el pueblo donde vivimos, había adquirido esa noción de la importancia de la cultura por los procesos que se estaban dando en el seno mismo del pueblo desde finales de los 60 y comienzos de los 70 y que él, como tantos otros, había tenido la oportunidad de vivir.

Los 70 se recuerdan por haber presenciado el renacimiento del uso de nuestra bandera y del orgullo de lo nacional, asociados a las luchas boxísticas de nuestros grandes púgiles o a los campeonatos de baloncesto y a los conciertos de música de salsa.

Aún en los años cincuenta desplegar la bandera puertorriqueña era un acto de desafío, lo cual era abucheado y/o apedreado por las mismas masas que hoy lucen orgullosas gorros con la bandera nacional, o la llevan cosidas a sus ropas, flotando desde las bicicletas o pegadas a los cristales de los automóviles. Recordemos que no fue hasta el 1952, cuando se instaura el actual estado político llamado Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, que finalmente se declara oficial a nuestra bandera, la cual existía como tal pero ¿marginalmente? Obviamente, la importancia de lo descrito reside en ver los procesos que se dieron y que simbólicamente se expresan en la identificación con la bandera. Hoy es la bandera de todos los puertorriqueños, pero hace apenas unos treinta años era la bandera de un sector político específico, los independentistas. Los eventos deportivos y el movimiento cultural posibilitaron en parte la recuperación de este símbolo nacional y con ello el esclarecimiento de una identidad propia nacional. Creo que es importante para un posterior análisis entender las implicaciones de este proceso donde para el grueso de la población puertorriqueña, los símbolos nacionales han sido asumidos masivamente a través de estas experiencias en el campo de la cultura y no en la lucha política.

Estos también fueron los años donde sectores del pueblo comienzan a organizarse, como hemos indicado, a través de la gestión cultural y en su "defensa" como ellos mismos reclaman. No sólo la desilusión con la frustrante gestión política motivaron a muchos a buscar otros espacios, eventos como los descritos, las peleas boxísticas o los conciertos en los coliseos, propiciaron una nueva reflexión. La vida cotidiana misma se volvía fuente de observación e inquietud, oscuramente se percibía que allí se estaban dando nuevas e importantes batallas.

■ *Nuevos espacios para el quehacer cultural*

Las luchas políticas en y fuera de Puerto Rico desde la década de los 60 hasta comienzos de los 70 estuvieron marcadas por el espíritu esperanzador que impregnaron, por ejemplo, el triunfo de la Revolución Cubana y la continuada lucha de las guerrillas en Latinoamerica y de las luchas de los afro-norteamericanos y/o el movimiento contra la guerra de Vietnam. En Puerto Rico, esa década del 70 marca a su vez una primera crisis económica en el período que tan triunfalmente se había inagurado en los 50. El impacto de esa crisis se dejó sentir entre otros elementos por una expansión del desempleo. Posteriormente y como un intento de acallarla, con la intensificación de las ayudas masivas del Estado en la vida de los puertorriqueños, en las formas de programas de beneficencia pública, tales como cupones para alimentos, rentas para viviendas subsidiadas por el Estado norteamericano en Puerto Rico y sus representantes criollos, becas para estudiantes, además de las ya establecidas ayudas federales a veteranos, incapacitados y asistencia médica a sectores de ingresos bajos, con fondos provistos en su mayoría por el gobierno americano. No parece desacertado decir que en ese momento no se pudo entender la dimensión que tuvo para la sociedad puertorriqueña la inserción masiva e intensificación de las ayudas federales norteamericanas a la vida del puertorriqueño. Este fue uno de los factores que mermó la fuerza política pro-independencia o liberadora que años antes parecía había asumido una porción significativa de la comunidad. Muchos problemas sociales se apaciguaron, y con ello las luchas políticas perdieron terreno definitivo. Creemos que esto sucedió sin una comprensión cabal de muchos de los procesos transformadores que se estaban dando en el seno de la sociedad puertorriqueña. Sin em-

bargo, muchos de estos mismos procesos conllevaron la intensificación de complejos problemas sociales como la droga-adicción que ha hecho estragos en la juventud del país; la criminalidad y el crecimiento de una idiosincrasia de la dependencia junto con un debilitamiento de una ética del trabajo. Si bien el Estado había logrado crear algunos aparentes remedios para problemas graves tales como el aumento del desempleo y por ende del hambre, todavía no podía bregar con la intensificación de problemas como la droga adicción, la criminalidad y la misma visión de dependencia extrema que los programas de ayudas federales auspician entre sus usuarios.

Muchos antiguos militantes políticos, y algunos maestros se desplazaron hacia la lucha en el campo cultural después de diferentes crisis dentro de los organismos políticos independentistas y de izquierda de los años setenta. Los primeros con un sentido de impotencia para con la lucha política y esperanzados de que lograrían dar unas batallas por salvar el país desde el [illegible] cultural. Buscaban también [illegible] participación democrática más [illegible] a los que la experiencia en los partidos políticos les había ofrecido. A su vez, los maestros, motivados por críticas al currículo de enseñanza del actual sistema educativo, comenzaron a organizar desde sus salones de clases o en sus comunidades, grupos educativos, culturales o de luchas comunitarias.[7] A los maestros les era imposible afectar este sistema , dado la estructura de poca o ninguna participación en el diseño del sistema educativo.

Muchos de los activistas que en los pueblos, barrios y ciudades han organizado grupos promotores de actividades culturales, han tenido entre sus propósitos desarrollar un nuevo tipo de lucha política y/o ven la cultura como una cura a muchos de los males sociales. Aunque muy embrionariamente, la cultura se empieza a conceptualizar como algo que va mucho más allá de sus expresiones artísticas, pues contiene el germen (o en su espacio se debaten los ideales) de cómo queremos que sea nuestro país y gente.

Las determinadas ideas políticas de estos ex-activistas, para bien o para mal, han marcado el desarrollo de su gestión cultural y forman parte del sustrato de lo que hoy en día está agitando ese movimiento. Muchos de ellos han entendido, por ejemplo, como una misión el "conservar y defender nuestra cultura" y con ello "salvar a la nación" de la americanización, la estadidad o anexión definitiva a Estados Unidos, la muerte de una identidad propia. Esta identidad todavía se entiende como la de "jíbaros" u hombres y mujeres de la tierra. Aunque ya no somos un país agrícola, lo fuímos durante la mayoría de estos casi quinientos años de existencia.

Los maestros, por su parte, quienes comenzaron organizando actividades culturales para darles una alternativa de recreación y acción a los estudiantes, han ido percibiendo en este espacio otras posibilidades de acción organizativa comunal, de platea para el discurso afirmativo nacional y moral.

Bajo esta sombrilla de la cultura se busca realizar todo este complejo de objetivos. Por ejemplo, se entiende que en ese espacio que provee la acción cultural se posibilita una muy deseada unidad del pueblo puertorriqueño, unidad que va más allá de diferencias partidistas, de clase, raza y religión. Esa ansiada unidad nacional no se da en la acción político partidista. Así es, desgraciadamente, la experiencia compartida por todos los puertorriqueños y que constituye tema de preocupación constante. Esa unidad nacional es una de las metas y/o mitos a que más se alude en conversaciones y discursos desde la platea cultural. Además, bajo la sombra de la cultura o la acción cultural, la comunidad misma se permite y acepta el afirmar, defender y luchar por su cultura o su puertorriqueñidad, lo cual está vedado socialmente en otros espacios. Recordemos, por ejemplo, cómo es común que en cualquier concierto de salsa, en los coliseos de la ciudad, tanto en Estados Unidos como en Puerto Rico, se despliegue la bandera puertorriqueña y

se le entregue ésta a los artistas, quienes disparan discursos en defensa de la "música nuestra" con obvio o vedado mensaje de afirmación nacional, mientras la gente se emociona y la vitorea abiertamente. De modo que esta lucha cultural es realmente una por la afirmación y unidad nacional, que, idealmente, en teoría, debe ayudarnos a sobrevivir como nación ante lo que se entiende es su destrucción inminente. Es, también, un instrumento político.

Por otro lado, en los espacios culturales que se han ido abriendo en los festivales que organiza cada pueblo y no pocos barrios, se les da voz y voto a todos los que tengan algo que aportar. Vale decir, es el único espacio donde activamente y democráticamente el grueso de la gente puede expresarse ¡claro! a través del arte, su arte.

Los maestros, a su vez, se habían estado tomando la iniciativa de traer a sus salones de clases, a los auditorios escolares, o a sus comunidades, a conferenciantes o a artistas para que conversasen con los estudiantes o vecinos, sobre sus experiencias o demostrasen sus destrezas en las artes (sobretodo las populares que eran las que iban a tener una respuesta positiva inmediata entre el estudiantado). Nada extraño quizás para una escuela, excepto que a partir de los años 70, los artistas que fueron tomando el escenario eran, por ejemplo, músicos de cuatro o el güiro (instrumentos típicos de la música de campo) o de panderos (tambor recortado de la música afropuertorriqueña). Las figuras de puertorriqueños ilustres comenzaron a exhibirse en los pizarrones escolares junto a las americanas y ya tradicionales de Washington, el pavo o los peregrinos del día de "Thanksgiving" o la calabaza y la bruja del día de "Halloween". La idea era responder y comunicar que también nosotros tenemos grandes figuras y días importantes en nuestra historia como nación. Era una guerra disimulada que hasta al sistema le fue difícil acallar, pues no existía (al menos en los años presentes) una política abierta en contra de lo puertorriqueño, sino más bien una especie de automenosprecio silencioso que se confabulaba para no darle importancia. Pero aún dentro de una concepción tradicional de nuestra historia y cultura, comenzaba a articularse un discurso sobre nuestros valores, tradicionales y quizás poco iluminadores de procesos importantes de entender nuestra realidad, pero aún así, éstos eran oídos en salones de clase, plazas públicas, coliseos, iglesias y medios de comunicación quizás por primera vez para grandes cantidades de personas usualmente huérfanas de este tipo de experiencia.

Todo esto no sucedió sin represión. Los maestros, sobretodo los que hacían gala de su independentismo o socialismo fueron y siguen siendo víctimas de cesantías o traslados a otras áreas de trabajo. No obstante, el trabajo de miles y silenciosos maestros continúa dándose, no sólo dentro del salón de clases, sino también fuera de éste, en la comunidad. Muchos maestos han sido los organizadores de centros culturales en sus comunidades. Entre algunos de estos centros que tienen el apoyo oficial del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, algunos han logrado realizar una labor con éxito por varios años, hecho significativo si vemos que la falta de continuidad es una de las debilidades en el trabajo. Resumiendo las respuestas que dan los maestros al inquirírseles sobre este proceso, indican varios puntos interesantes entre los cuales sobresalen: primero, la necesidad de enseñarle a los estudiantes los valores de nuestra cultura en un sistema que ha olvidado o rezagado a un plano muy secundario todo lo que tiene que ver con lo puertorriqueño; segundo, la preocupación por proveer a la gente joven de actividades de recreación y creativas que los ayude a salirse del ambiente de las drogas que se ha ido apoderando del país y ha golpeado fuertemente la vida comunitaria. Tercero, la posibilidad de hablar de nuestra realidad y de "enseñar a los estudiantes" la moral y necesidad de cambiar conductas e ideas que están destruyendo a nuestra sociedad.

Se fueron así intensificando las actividades culturales a partir de los años 70 de manera evidente y a su vez, ampliando sus públicos. Estas, que antes eran exclusivas de las fiestas patronales anuales ahora son habituales para muchos, sino todos, los pueblos y en muchas otras ocasiones a lo largo del año.[8] En esos múltiples festivales que ahora proliferan por pueblos y barrios (por sus nombres los conocereis: son los festivales dedicados a la caña, café, pescao, burén, la yuca, etc.) se redimen identidades comunitarias, las cuales estaban a punto de desaparecer de la cotidianidad que antes les dió sentido, por una variedad de razones; pero que el instinto de conservación ¿cultural o nacional? de esos promotores y sus festivales las devolvió a un nuevo contenido simbólico.[9] Ellas representan lo que no queremos perder, lo que es nuestro, lo que nos da continuidad, lo que nos permite reunirnos y el disfrute de la vida. Ellas posibilitan la reproducción de lo cultural y social.

Con estos festivales se ha dado una divulgación masiva de aquellas expresiones culturales (la música, artesanías y elaboración de comidas criollas muchas de las cuales eran sólo conocidas regionalmente y ahora lo son para toda la nación) favorecidas por las mayorías populares y como consecuencia de un sentido de fuerza a nivel social y renovada identidad.

Otro fenómeno, antes mencionado, fortalecía lo que se estaba dando en las ciudades o los pueblos: los grandes espectáculos en los coliseos de las ciudades en y fuera de Puerto Rico y la divulgación por televisión de eventos relacionados sobretodo con "música de salsa". Con ello se llenaba de puertorriqueños el firmamento de estrellas musicales y crecía el orgullo por lo puertorriqueño relacionado a la música popular. Este fenómeno en sí merece un análisis más detallado pendiente aún en la agenda de muchos investigadores, pero para nuestros propósitos es quizás importante señalar que con el vigoroso surgimiento de la nueva música popular llamada Salsa, cobra una renovada presencia en el escenario social los sectores populares. Quizás desde los años veinte y treinta no se había visto y/o sentido masivamente en el país la presencia de estos sectores populares. Es posible que este fuera el período (los 70) donde culminaba, a nivel social, todo un proceso que se estaba gestando desde los años cincuenta. Muchos vemos el surgimiento de la Salsa como culminación de ese proceso de gestación de la nueva sociedad urbana. Creemos que en el examen de ese proceso podemos encontrar algunas pistas para entender de dónde surge lo antes narrado: el sentido de fragmentación y necesidad de conseguir una unidad nacional y la presencia y participación de grupos más amplios en la gestión cultural.

Parece inminente el preguntarse por qué respondió el público a esta avanzada cultural articulada tanto por activistas, maestros, artistas, medios de comunicación y políticas gubernamentales. ¿Respondió porque coincidió con las urgencias políticas de algunos de sus promotores? ¿Era simplemente una masa movida por los fuertes hilos que manejan los medios masivos de comunicación? ¿Fueron tan exitosas las estrategias de las políticas gubernamentales a favor de la cultura? ¿Eran los maestros tan excelentes líderes como para promover este auge? En fin,¿qué estaba pasando dentro del pueblo puertorriqueño?

■ *Las migraciones*

De los muchos elementos que conformaron este proceso, nuestra atención recae sobre el impacto que causaron las migraciones desencadenadas por la rearticulación urbana de los años 50. De hecho, estos años marcan el inicio y fin de unos procesos de grandes transformaciones para el país. Por un lado, podríamos afirmar que es el período en que se cierra el ciclo de formación de la sociedad puertorriqueña dominada por una economía agrícola. Comienza a estructurarse entonces una sociedad más urbana dentro de una economía industrial y capitalista, enmarcado todo esto aún dentro de una continuada situación colonial. Creemos que la

fragmentación que sobrevino a nuestra sociedad como resultado de ese proceso de transformación ha sido uno de los motores que ha inyectado de fuerza el movimiento cultural.

Del campo emigran a las ciudades grandes masas de sectores de trabajadores agrícolas buscando empleo en las fábricas que recién comienzan a establecerse en el país, muchas de ellas, promovidas por el mismo gobierno. Los sectores que fueron absorbidos como mano de obra en estas fábricas o en el sector de servicios públicos que crece paralelamente en este período, se integraron a vivir a las nuevas urbanizaciones que se construyeron a todo vapor durante esos años. Los desempleados, pasarán a vivir en caseríos (complejos de viviendas públicas) o edificarán nuevos arrabales con fuerza desafiadora, en los alrededores de las ciudades de mayor importancia. El desempleo también significó la emigración masiva hacia los Estados Unidos para millares de familias puertorriqueñas. Las luchas de los puertorriqueños allá tuvieron importantes repercusiones en nuestro país. El puente tendido por esas migraciones entre Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico creará otra corriente de diferencias y continuidades, de fragmentaciones y de búsqueda de unidad.

■ *Nuevas comunidades*

Entendemos que este proceso significó por un lado la destrucción o la transformación de las antiguas comunidades y el desarrollo de unas nuevas o casi nuevas (urbanizaciones/caseríos o vivienda pública/ arrabales en y fuera de Puerto Rico) dentro del desarrollo de grandes centros urbanos tales como: el Area Metropolitana de San Juan, Bayamón, Guaynabo y Carolina. Conllevó el desarrollo de nuevos estilos de vida y los subsecuentes embates a las formas culturales desarrolladas en la sociedad agrícola; y naturalmente el desarrollo de otras formas. No es de extrañar entonces, que las expresiones de las culturas populares, enmarcadas dentro de la antigua sociedad agrícola fueran perdiendo el paso ante las grandes transformaciones que se estaban dando en el país.

En ese momento se entendió todo el proceso, sobretodo entre ciertos sectores políticos e intelectuales, no sólo como la amenaza de la pérdida de la nacionalidad, sino más aún, de la identidad como puertorriqueños, de la identidad de ser hombres y mujeres de la tierra.

No sabemos bien si los sectores populares interpretaron con el mismo sentido de crisis las transformaciones que obviamente estaban viviendo. El Puerto Rico moderno que comenzaba a estructurarse llenó de ilusiones a un grueso de la población, las cuales fueron desvaneciéndose con el tiempo. Por ejemplo, Ismael Rivera, maestro sonero de la salsa, contaba de su ansiedad por salir del "arrabal" justo cuando comenzó a cantar en esa década del cincuenta. Había un deseo inmenso de alcanzar una "vida mejor y de progreso" que parecía prometer el nuevo reordenamiento económico, urbano y social y que ahora no vamos a cuestionar. Pero entre muchos sectores preocupados e intérpretes de los procesos culturales, quienes por lo general han dominado el análisis y también entre instituciones dedicadas a la cuestión cultural, no se pudo ver ese momento como uno donde la sociedad que se estaba gestando crearía otras formas, identidades o énfasis dentro de la cultura, que también reclamarían ostentar la identidad nacional.

En general, para todos los puertorriqueños esa sociedad urbana en gestación, por su peculiar desarrollo fue vista como un proceso de americanización asociado éste a la modernización, por lo tanto con elementos positivos y negativos como lo era la pérdida de lo puertorriqueño. Nos referimos a una pérdida de la identidad nacional en el sentido que le dieron los sectores políticos e intelectuales de tendencias independentistas; y también a una pérdida, en el sentido que le dieron los sectores populares a la desaparición de un tipo de vida comunal, que aún dentro de sus enormes limitaciones materiales, parece que ofrecía para el grueso

de estos sectores un sentido de solidaridad y convivencia que ha sido difícil de recuperar en la sociedad urbana actual.

No sólo se construyeron en esos años 50 y 60 viviendas para familias de ingresos medios y para los "pobres del país", también los sectores adinerados se mudaban a nuevos enclaves. De hecho, lo que uno puede observar es que la vida entre las clases se ha ido estratificando más. Cada vez es más evidente que la vida de los sectores acomodados se desarrolla en otros espacios y con nuevos estilos de vida; así mismo la vida de otros sectores que se mudan a urbanizaciones o edificios agrupados según su ingreso o carencia de éstos, como sería para los que tienen que optar por la vivienda pública o las invasiones de terrenos.

Podemos observar también, que en un área como la de Carolina o Bayamón, donde se aglutina el porcentaje más alto de la población en el país (con excepción del Area Metropolitana de San Juan), actualmente sus antiguos centros urbanos ya no son las zonas de mayor importancia comercial ni poblacional, aunque puedan aún ser sede de los servicios y oficinas administrativas. En el presente la vida de las gentes de estos pueblos o zonas se desarrolla mayormente en las urbanizaciones (algunas de las cuales han llegado a conformar nuevos poblados) y en los centros comerciales.

Para sectores medios, trabajadores de servicios y profesionales, también se estaban desarrollando nuevos estilos de vida, como el tantas veces mencionado y poco analizado consumerismo voraz que azota a todos por igual, todo esto en sus propios espacios.

Aunque en los modernos y gigantes centros comerciales ahora se "encuentran" las distintas clases, éstas lo hacen en la práctica del consumo. "Los pobres" miran a los más adinerados comprar y sueñan con llegar algún día a participar también de estos bienes. Muchos se endeudan más allá de sus posibilidades económicas reales. Algunos jóvenes se dedican a robar en las tiendas, supermercados y en los estacionamientos para automóviles.

■ *Urbas/caseríos y arrabales*

Las nuevas comunidades urbanas estaban compuestas por familias que llegaban de diferentes sectores y subculturas, si queremos llamar así la diversidad que aun en un país pequeño como el nuestro puede observarse. Había gente de la montaña, antiguos trabajadores agrícolas, racialmente más blancos, había gente de costa, más oscuros de piel, llegaron gente de barrios proletarios de los grandes y pequeños pueblos, cada uno con sus tradiciones musicales y culinarias que todos conocían, pero que no todos practicaban. Formas de convivencia y culturales que antes eran regionales, comenzaron ahora a perderse, o a integrarse a un entretejido que iba a componer a muchos. En algunos espacios esos muchos eran cada vez más. Por ejemplo, tanto el cuatro, instrumento musical, como la forma musical o género llamado "seis", que venían de la tradición musical campesina se integrarán progresivamente a una forma musical más contemporánea, "la salsa", que hemos caracterizado como música urbana. Precisamente las grandes zonas urbanas comenzaban a estructurarse entonces. Las expresiones culturales regionales, de sobrevivir, comienzan a extender su radio de influencias o a nacionalizarse.

Existían pues diferencias e iban a generarse otras nuevas, pero todas, las viejas y las nuevas, lo que evidenciaban era la ruptura con una continuidad de siglos de una comunidad básicamente solidaria, cuyas diferencias ahora parecían secundarias ante las dificultades en reemplazarla con la nueva en formación.[10] Esta fragmentación tenía, claro está, una base en la realidad social y económica que se estaba articulando desde comienzos de los cuarenta pero que se hace evidente a partir del cincuenta. De igual modo que la había tenido la comunidad solidaria previa.

Hasta apenas los años treinta el grueso de la población puertorriqueña vivía en una economía agrícola industrial capitalista, dominada básicamente por tres renglones, la caña, el tabaco y el café. El grueso de la población estaba constituída por trabajadores agrí-

colas, algunos bastante proletarizados ya, quienes compartían o tenían en común esta vida del trabajo junto a unas experiencias de luchas políticas y/ o comunales; además de unos estilos de vida cotidiana parecidos. De hecho, durante los años veinte y treinta ciertos sectores politizados del movimiento obrero habían comenzado a gestar una consciencia y visión de clase donde subyacían nuevas bases culturales. La solidaridad, una de esas importantes bases de la vida cultural comunitaria de los sectores trabajadores que en la práctica había posibilitado la sobrevivencia y la comunión entre los oprimidos y que posteriormente fue revitalizada por ese movimiento obrero organizado, comenzó a quebrarse ante la disolusión del movimiento y ante el progresivo desmantelamiento de muchas de las comunidades y de la economía agrícola. Al comenzar a estructurarse una economía basada en la pequeña industria de manufactura, a partir de los años cuarenta, pero con mayor fuerza en los cincuenta, y con ello, al abrirse un nuevo campo de trabajo: el sector industrial, el de servicios; al generarse nuevas oportunidades de educación, las migraciones antes señaladas, el comienzo de la masificación de las ayudas federales en la vida cotidiana, entre otros factores, comienzan a formularse las bases para una fragmentación de estos sectores que antes compartían ampliamente unas experiencias en común.

En las viejas comunidades que todavía quedaban o en las nuevas construídas por el gobierno para los "pobres y desempleados": los caseríos; o de los arrabales, muchos de los cuales fueron "invasiones de terrenos" realizados en abierto desafío al Estado, fue donde quizás, más duro golpearon las diferencias y/o las fragmentaciones. Estos fueron los años donde el grueso de nuestro pueblo, que había vivido bastante fuera del alcance del Estado, comienza un proceso de integración y relación con éste en un esquema de extrema dependencia y por lo tanto también de mucho conflicto.[11] De modo que durante un periodo se sintieron mucho, por un lado, las diferencias y las pérdidas, como por otro lado también se vinculaban o fortalecían las continuidades y los puntos en común. Al coincidir en los años setenta, la culminación de una primera etapa (podríamos llamarlo así) del proceso de formación de los nuevos enclaves urbanos con la primera gran crisis económica del proceso instaurado en los cincuenta, se dan las bases para que surja este movimiento cultural que hemos tratado de describir.[12] Por un lado, ya se había cuajado una primera generación urbana que estaba sintiendo las rupturas y necesidades, enfrentándose a nuevos problemas y formas de cotidianidad; por otro lado, surge también la primera gran crisis o momento de desencanto con las promesas de felicidad que la sociedad urbana, americanizada y progresista parecía augurar. La mencionada crisis económica propicia la inserción de las ayudas masivas del Estado como forma de sobrevivencia y a su vez, como apuntado en párrafos anteriores, desarticula la lucha política, mientras se acrecientan problemas sociales graves como la droga-adicción y criminalidad.[13]

■ *La defensa de la cultura desde el Estado*

Sin embargo hay que recalcar que la misión de "defender y conservar la cultura" no fue sólo una estrategia asumida por los sectores arriba mencionados, ni el efecto de los factores económicos y sociales recién apuntados, sino que el mismo Estado la hizo suya. La visión de crisis, de que estábamos perdiendo nuestra cultura (no que estábamos en un proceso de transformación hacia otras formas culturales con identidad propia o puertorriqueña) fue, a nuestro modo de ver, uno de los motivos que tuvo el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP) y sus creadores, de lanzar para los años cincuenta una ofensiva para conservar nuestra cultura, creando una política cultural dirigida a salvar y protegerla. Entre éstas se le dio importancia a las "expresiones del folklore" que se entendía estaban desapareciendo.

El ICP, especie de ministerio de cultura desarrollado por el Estado en el 1955, creó con su labor un impacto muy amplio, cuyo análisis requiere del examen de su copiosa producción de políticas culturales en forma de leyes a nivel nacional y estatutos o reglamentación a nivel municipal; la evaluación de su participación como empresario cultural por casi tres décadas; creador de centros de enseñanzas de las artes; la de organizador de cientos de centros culturales en toda la isla; la del desarrollo exitoso de zonas arquitectónicas y arqueológicas protegidas; publicación de libros de autores puertorriqueños contemporáneos y anteriores; entre otros muchos logros o importantes intentos por conservar y desarrollar el patrimonio cultural que indiscutiblemente han dado importantes frutos no empece críticas de peso a su gestión.[14]

No obstante, para efectos de este trabajo, existen diferencias entre el concepto del cual parte el ICP para elaborar sus políticas y las visiones y vivencias que movilizaron a algunos sectores dentro de las capas más populares como hemos mencionado anteriormente. Un ejemplo: aún para el ICP la música de Salsa no entra dentro del plan de sus actividades culturales promovidas y aceptadas, no empece a la obvia riqueza e importancia de este desarrollo cultural. Vale decir, esta significativa aportación de la cultura popular puertorriqueña todavía no ha sido valorada como tal por nuestra más importante institución cultural.

La idea de la cultura puertorriqueña y/o de la sociedad puertorriqueña como una sola y unificada que subyace en los planteamientos del ICP, escamotea la presencia de los desafiantes sectores trabajadores con sus expresiones culturales, como fuerzas con vida propia dentro de esa cultura. Difiere también del sentido y vivencia solidaria a nivel comunal que los sectores de origen campesino y/o proletario tenían y que le daba un sentido de unidad a estos sectores, distinto a la propuesta visión o concepción de unidad cultural de muchos de los estrategas de las políticas culturales del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña.

■ *Recomponiendo el son nuestro*

En medio de la diversidad y fragmentación que propició este tipo de desarrollo en la vida urbana, el cual rompió, hasta cierto grado, con unos estilos de vida comunitarios y solidarios que aún sobrevivían entre sectores trabajadores, la cultura se convertiría en una sombrilla bajo la cual se reagruparía nuevamente la comunidad y participaría o reviviría la fuerza solidaria que la vida urbana parecía debilitar. Al así hacerlo, reconstruye nuevas formas de solidaridad en el nuevo contexto urbano social. Función nada desconocida para la cultura, pero que la nueva situación social tendía a fortalecer.

De hecho, podría también pensarse que a través de la actividad cultural se creó la noción de una continuidad que era difícil de percibir en otras esferas, al menos con un sentido positivo. Por ejemplo, no sólo se sentía la desaparición de la cultura y vidas campesinas como algo negativo que estaba ocurriendo, sino que la nueva vida en los arrabales de Nueva York o San Juan, la proliferación de los llamados males sociales: criminalidad, drogas, robos, etc., interpretados popularmente como "los males que trae el progreso", tuvieron y siguen comunicando un sentido de deterioro y destrucción de nuestra sociedad. Por el contrario, en la impresionante y prolífera producción musical, en el sorprendente desarrollo de las artesanías y en la persistencia de nuestro saber y sabor alimentario, el puertorriqueño mantiene su identidad y por lo tanto su lucha por la vida.

Quizás lo único triunfador claramente en ese período, era el empuje de la cultura en ciertas expresiones populares y en las actividades de algunos deportes. La música de salsa testimonia en algunos de sus textos un sentido de lucha y sobrevivencia ante un cuadro social deprimente. Ciertamente se idealizaba el pasado, el cual se suponía contenía las claves para la felicidad social perdida, pero en las

canciones también hay críticas del presente y propuestas de afirmación nacional que se dirigen al futuro. De hecho, en este último año podemos decir que la música se ha vuelto no sólo en un medio de expresar preocupación por los males sociales que nos aquejan, sino también ha asumido la vanguardia en la gestión transformadora del pueblo. Textos con mensajes feministas, pro-cultura puertorriqueña, hermandad de los pueblos, anti-drogas, anti-maltrato conyugal o de los niños están proliferando con obvia intención de "salvar nuestro pueblo".

El impacto negativo de este "progreso" que nos ha tocado vivir puede llevarnos a preguntar, si este movimiento cultural no contendrá también un tipo de protesta contra un "progreso" que ha dejado mucho que desear en la experiencia social y cotidiana en su mirar idealizado del pasado. En muchas ocasiones algunos hemos interpretado y criticado lo que entendíamos era ese tipo de nostalgia hacia un pasado mitificado y el cual estaba lejos de poder darnos la verdadera felicidad. Sin dejar de ser esto cierto, al menos para algunas expresiones y entre algunos sectores (quizás es más evidente en algunos anuncios comerciales) valdría la pena re-examinar si podemos interpretar de igual manera los contenidos de, por ejemplo, algunas canciones. Vale decir, que esa revaloración de formas culturales asociadas con una vida no-urbana pasada, a veces idílica, quizás esté expresando realmente una desilusión con la vida actual de progreso.

Ese anhelo por la recuperación del pasado existe, pero no es todo. Quizás se de porque no se ha podido gestar todavía una visión del futuro, alternativa, convincente para todos, a nivel político, social y económico de lo que queremos sea nuestra sociedad; aunque algunas voces apuntan hacia ésto. Crear esta visión alternativa para nuestra sociedad, desde nuestra sociedad, es sumamente difícil. ¿Hacia dónde más podemos ir? parecen preguntarse en silencio muchos. Vivimos en una sociedad con obvios adelantos materiales, que aun otros países hermanos (lo sabemos a través de la televisión y la experiencia diaria de los emigrados dominicanos o haitianos a nuestra tierra) luchan por obtener. Nosotros ya lo tenemos—o creemos tenerlo. No vamos a entrar ahora en el extensísimo e imprescindible debate de cómo ha llegado hasta nosotros ese progreso y sus consecuencias a corto y largo plazo. El hecho es que está ahí. Sin embargo, una nueva época se avecina para nosotros los puertorriqueños, pues aunque nos gusta en parte ese progreso material, su viejo encanto ha ido en decadencia. No sólo se le ve, justamente o no, como causa de muchos males que nos hacen sufrir a nivel individual y social; se impugna su capacidad de satisfacer necesidades del espíritu y se le está comenzando a identificar como fuerza destructiva para el medio-ambiente y la Tierra misma. Sin embargo, también es cierto que no sabemos desprendernos de él. Ya no sabríamos, creo que así sentimos, vivir de otra manera...aunque estamos seguros de que queremos otra cosa.

■ *Primeras conclusiones*

Partiendo de que el deseo de unidad o solidaridad es una de las necesidades más reclamadas por la comunidad puertorriqueña, y que la actividad actual cultural le permite al pueblo puertorriqueño recuperar y re-estructurar las bases para esa unidad; podemos afirmar que el movimiento cultural que se ha ido desarrollando ha estado desempeñando una función importante para el pueblo puertorriqueño en su actual situación. Ha estado asociado por ejemplo, a la actividad política, y/o a un nuevo espacio social. Ha estado asociado a la lucha por defender y conservar la cultura, por hacerla valer. También a la lucha por rescatar identidades propias que se han percibido como amenazadas y a la vez proponer otras, por lo tanto a un ideal de la sociedad y del ser puertorriqueño. Ha pretendido servir como punto de resistencia contra los avances de las culturas dominantes, tanto la norteamericana como la de ciertos

sectores puertorriqueños. Desde la platea cultural se ha comenzado a elaborar unas propuestas para una futura sociedad puertorriqueña donde la unidad de todos los sectores bajo el ideario del bien y justicia social y la participación democrática son puntales de este movimiento.

Se ha nutrido de una variedad de ideas y de participantes, tales como los que hemos llamado ex-activistas políticos, artistas, maestros, y ciertos sectores sociales quienes han sido un motor importante en este desarrollo. Ha afectado a grandes porciones de nuestra población e incluso ha establecido y protegido un espacio y economía a grupos de artistas, artesanos y otros productores pequeños que usualmente no pueden o no quieren insertarse dentro los medios de comunicación de masas o en la economía oficial y dominante.

Se ha aprendido además, la conveniencia de afirmar lo nuestro con el ropaje o lenguaje de lo cultural. Esto posibilitaba una presencia y una comunicación que no se daba a nivel abierto político. Permite penetrar otros espacios, y recibe el apoyo de la gente, o el pueblo se apoya y reafirma a sí mismo, en gran medida porque tiene un papel más activo y participa en la elaboración de estas actividades y de su contenido. Vale decir, está facilitando un espacio para una práctica de participación democrática. En los festivales, mercados de artesanías, se deja de ser un poco espectador para convertirse en actor. De modo que una primera conclusión le otorga un saldo positivo al proceso que hemos tratado de ver. Sin embargo, aunque muchos creemos que hoy en día los puertorriqueños nos sentimos ser más puertorriqueños que antes, muchos se lo cuestionan y con razón.

Algunos detractores de la interpretación más positiva de este movimiento plantean, que este es un puertorriqueñismo fácil, que el mismo sólo se ocupa de defender el "bacalaíto frito" (plato típico de nuestra cocina), pero no tiene con que apechar los verdaderos issues de este país. Obviamente no compartimos esta visión del movimiento cultural que se está dando, pero creemos que este tipo de planteamiento en forma de queja, lo que realmente quiere expresar es la frustación ante la situación real de la ausencia de un movimiento político que pueda desarrollar una muy necesaria lucha por constituir nuestra nación como una libre y democrática. La preocupación se agrava ante el hecho de que se nos ha impuesto, por otro proceso de corte colonialista, el decidir nuestro "status político" en un futuro plebiscito. Ciertamente esa decisión es importante y tiene que realizarse, pero muchos criticamos el proceso y la prisa con que Estados Unidos está forzando todo el proceso. Nos guste o no, la posibilidad de que en el 1991 se celebre este plebiscito es una realidad que afrontar. De ganar las fuerzas pro-anexión, tal y como lo pronostican las encuestas, nos obliga a preguntar sobre la relación entre este movimiento cultural que hemos caracterizado como uno de fortalecimiento para nuestra identidad nacional y la expresión política de esa fuerza.

Muchos creemos que definitivamente todo este proceso de afirmación nacional jugará un papel importante en los eventos políticos relacionados al plebiscito, incluso mucho más de lo que de primera intención podría suponerse, aunque ciertamente no creemos que sea el elemento decisivo como muchos le adjudican. Pero dilucidar esta importante cuestión rebasa los límites de este escrito que sólo ha intentado explorar una rica y compleja experiencia de esa isla del Caribe, Puerto Rico, que muchos no conocen o que piensan ha sido tranquilamente devorada por la poderosa nación norteamericana. Algo de nuestras luchas debe haber quedado en estas páginas, estoy segura que ellas serán el inicio de un futuro análisis más profundo de nuestra realidad y no un testamento de la misma. Nuestras búsquedas, logros y fracasos, creemos que forman parte de esa América que estamos buscando y ayudando a construir. Pa' lante. ❑

NOTAS

1 Eduardo Galeano, "A propósito del Quinto Centenario," *Revista Christus* 4, (mayo 1989):625.

2 Los años del 1968 al 1984, podríamos caracterizarlos como los años del crecimiento del partido de la anexión de Puerto Rico a Estados Unidos (PNP).

3 Específicamente los intelectuales, algunos miembros de las viejas burguesías o sectores dominantes del país y grupos políticos, como los independentistas y/o nacionalistas

4 Ver ensayo Angel Quintero Rivera, "De la fiesta al festival: los movimientos sociales para el disfrute de la vida en Puerto Rico", en *David Y Goliath:Revista del Consejo Latinoaméricano de las Ciencias Sociales*, 18 (febrero 1989).

5 Nos referimos a los debates que se dieron en torno a la aprobación de la la ley para instaurar un instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña entre los años de 1954 a 1955. Hubo discusiones muy reveladoras sobre lo adecuado o no de tener un instituto de "cultura puertorriqueña", cuestionando la existencia de la misma. Hubo quienes propusieron que en su defecto se organizara un instituto "puertorriqueño de cultura".

6 Discurso del presidente de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Dr. Almódovar sobre nuestra cultura puertorriqueña, calificándola de "cultura de dita" con sentido peyorativo. La dita es uno de los útiles de uso diario heredado de nuestra cultura indígena.

7 El hecho de que el Departamento de Instrucción Pública no fuese promotor de los valores culturales de nuestro país tiene una larga historia, imposible de resumir ahora, pero no es de extrañar a nadie que conozca los mecanismos de que se sirve cualquier Estado colonizado y colonizante. Recordemos no obstante que para los años treinta una de las luchas más importantes libradas en nuestro país fue establecer el español como idioma oficial para la enseñanza. Esa lucha se dio fuera del sistema de instrucción pública y sus logros afectaron para siempre el desarrollo de nuestra nación. 113

8 Los escenarios para las actividades culturales de los sectores populares antes eran en los negocios o bares de los pueblos y barrios, probablemente equivaldrían a las plazas públicas y coliseos de nuestra sociedad de masas de hoy. Aún hoy siguen siendo los bares y negocios de los pueblos y barrios espacios importantes para cierto tipo de actividad cultural.

9 Ver Angel G. Quintero Rivera, "De la fiesta al festival", op. cit.

10 No apoyo una idealización de este pasado, no obstante afirme este aspecto positivo solidario de la experiencia social del puertorriqueño de la sociedad agrícola. Nuestra reciente historiografía ha producido un análisis bastante extenso y detallado de lo que constituyó uno de los mitos más difundidos por las clases dominantes de nuestro país sobre la existencia, en el pasado siglo 19 sobre todo, de una sociedad un tanto idealizada, unida y sin conflictos, formada en épocas pretéritas por hacendados y trabajadores agrícolas, amos y esclavos. Los aportes de estos nuevos trabajos de análisis histórico y sociológico son claros en cuanto a revelar toda una gama de grandes y profundos conflictos sociales, no sólo dentro de clases diferentes sino inclusive dentro de una misma clase. Por ejemplo, entre sectores de trabajadores existía diferenciación entre el que era trabajador agrícola del artesano (diestro), entre los trabajadores blancos o negros.

11 Ver Angel G. Quintero Rivera, "La cimarronería como herencia y utopía", en *David y Goliath: Revista del Consejo Latinoamericano de las Ciencias Sociales*, 15, (Noviembre 1985); y Fernando Picó, *Vivir en Caimito*, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Edit. Huracán, 1988.

12 Este no era un proceso iniciado en esta época. Si atendiéramos a criterios históricos, tendríamos que aclarar, por ejemplo, que ya desde el pasado siglo comenzó a formularse una cultura urbana donde los sectores trabajadores forjaron a su vez el desarrollar de una cultura obrerista, caracterizada por el desafío y la solidaridad en la acción social. Esta tuvo su impacto social en la década del veinte (1920). Ya desde entonces comenzaban a sentirse las fisuras en la vieja solidaridad comunal y en la combatividad propiciada por el movimiento obrero organizado.

13 El PPD partido que desde los cuarenta se había sostenido en el poder con una mayoría significativa cae ante los avances del partido anexionista (PNP); el Partido Independentista (PIP) y el Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño (PSP) pierden electorado y dinamismo.

14 La extensa labor de casi 35 años desarrollada por el ICP exige un análisis más extenso y riguroso que el que podemos desarrollar en este momento. Estas páginas intentan aportar un importante marco de referencia histórico donde ubicar la gestión del ICP.

CENTRO LIBRARY

Evelina López Antonetty Puerto Rican Research Collection

Preliminary list of films and videotapes (VHS) available to the public from the *Centro* Library. For rental information, call Félix Rivera at 212 772 - 4197.

Lista parcial de filmes y videos (VHS) disponibles para uso público en la Biblioteca del CENTRO. Para el alquiler de las mismas favor de comunicarse con Félix Rivera, 212 772 - 4197.

Al Hawaii [VHS]. Ramón Almodóvar and Milagros Hernández de Noboa, co-producers. Puerto Rico; 1985; 30 min. Documents the migration of Puerto Ricans to Hawaii between November 1900 and August 1901.

Allí viene el temporal [VHS]. Isabelle Colón, producer; Luis Molina Casanova, director. Puerto Rico; 1988; 28 min. Presents an historical sweep of the impact of hurricanes in Puerto Rico.

El arresto [VHS]. Luis Antonio Rosario Quiles, director. Puerto Rico; 1982, Color, 28 min. Dramatization of events immediately after the assault on the U.S. Congress by Nationalist Party members in March 1954, which culminated in the arrest of Pedro Albizu Campos.

The Battle of Vieques [VHS]. Zydnia Nazario, director. Puerto Rico; 1986; Color; 40 min. Examines the U.S. Naval use of Vieques, a municipality of Puerto Rico, as a military training, exercise and deployment base.

El boleto de ida [VHS & Film]. Creaciones Nacionales de Puerto Rico, producer. Puerto Rico; 30 min. Traces the origin, history and disappearance of the train as an important means of transportation in Puerto Rico.

La buena herencia [VHS & Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education, producer. Puerto Rico; 1986; 28 min. A depiction of the life and customs of the Taino Indians and their influence upon Puerto Rican culture.

El cacique [VHS & Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education, producer. Puerto Rico; 1957; Black and white (B/W); Spanish dialogue; 28 min. A dramatization of how a group of rural people solved their problems with an authoritarian town leader.

Cafetal adentro [VHS]. Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña (CEREP); Carlos Malavé. 1988; Spanish; 40 min. History of Puerto Rico's coffee industry.

Conversación y poesía con Clemente Soto Veles [VHS]. BUYENEI 4, producer; José Parreño, director. New York; 1983.

Cuando llegaron [VHS & Film]. Helga M. Umpierre; Gabriel Suau. Puerto Rico; 22 min. This documentary traces the contributions of the four major Indian groups which inhabited Puerto Rico.

The Devil Is A Condition [VHS & Film]. Carlos de Jesús, director. New York; 22 min. The documentary exposes the housing conditions and needs of the poor in New York City, and the many obstacles they face in coping with this problem.

Different Visions [VHS & Film]. José R. Gaztambide, producer. New York; 20 min. Documentary about the life and work of Jorge Soto, Puerto Rican artist and founding member of the Taller Boricua in New York City.

Don Pedro o la vida de un pueblo [VHS & Film]. Camera News Inc., producer. Puerto Rico; 1977; 50 min.

El de los cabos blancos [VHS & Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education, producer. Puerto Rico; 1955; 34 min. Presents the struggle of a small tabacco farmer who tries to solve his problem by joining a cooperative.

En las manos del hombre [VHS & Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education, producer. Puerto Rico; 1952; 36 min. Extols the dignity of manual work.

Entretejidos: el arte del tejido y el encaje en Puerto Rico [VHS]. Grupo de Desarrollo Filmico Cultural, Luis Collazo, producers. Puerto Rico; 1987; 28 min. Documents lace-making in Puerto Rico with emphasis on the women who continue to produce *mundillo*, a special and exquisite lace popular in the western part of the Island.

Fiestas de cruz en Puerto Rico [VHS & Film]. José Artemio Torres, producer. Puerto Rico; 50 min. Explains the historical origins of this traditional, religious practice and how it is celebrated in present day Puerto Rico.

Frame Up! The Imprisonment of Martin Sostre [VHS]. Pacific Street Films Production, producer. New York; 30 min. Documents the case of Martin Sostre, a black Puerto Rican bookstore owner in Buffalo, New York who was framed on drug possession charges in 1967 and sentenced to 30–41 years in prison.

Francisco Oller, artista [VHS & Film]. Colegio Universitario Tecnológico de Ponce de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, producer; Prof. Margarita Balmaceda, director; 1984; 35 min.

A la guerra [VHS]. Thomas Sigel, director. New York; 1979; Color; 10 min. An ode to the war against poverty in New York's Puerto Rican community since the mass migration of the 1950s.

Have You Seen la Nueva Mujer Revolucionaria Puertorriqueña? [VHS]. Lisa Rudman, producer. 1988; 58 min.

The Heart of Loisaida [VHS & Film]. UNIFILM, producer. New York; 30 min. Documents housing struggles by Latino residents of New York's Lower East side who take over their buildings after they have been abandoned by their landlords.

La historia de todos nosotros [VHS]. CEREP, producer. Puerto Rico; 1986; 35 min.

Jorge Brandon, el coco que habla [VHS]. BUYENEI 4, producer; José Parreño, director. New York; 1978; 28 min.

Latino Images [VHS]. Coordinated by The Latino Collaborative, producer. New York; 1988; 58 min. Selection of segments of films produced by Latinos and interviews with the makers.

El legado: A Puerto Rican Legacy [VHS & Film]. ASPIRA, producer. New York; Color; English dialogue; 30 min. Traces the growth of the Puerto Rican community in New York City in the first half of this century by blending together historical film footage of the era and personal interviews with *pioneros* (pioneer migrants).

El legado de Arturo Shomburg [VHS]. Jack Delano and Ramón H. Almodóvar, producers; Guillermo Baralt, director. 25 min. Documents the life and work of the noted Black bibliophile, born and raised in Puerto Rico, who devoted much of his life to collecting and documenting the contributions of persons of the African diaspora.

The Life and Poetry of Julia de Burgos [VHS & Film]. José García Torres, producer. Puerto Rico; 1979; Color; Spanish dialogue with English subtitles; 28 min. Portrays the life and work of Puerto Rican poet, Julia de Burgos in a docu-drama format.

Luchando por la vida [VHS]. Aliento Cinematográfico, producer; José Artemio Torres, director. 40 min. Documents the role of women in the tobacco industry of Puerto Rico.

Machito: A Latin Jazz Legacy [VHS & Film]. Nubia Music Society, producer. New York; Color; English and Spanish with subtitles; 58 min. This documentary traces the career of Latin jazz great Machito. Latin and Jazz legends like Tito Puente, Dizzy

Gillespie, Dexter Gordon, and Ray Barretto along with the colorful impressarios Federico Pagani and Symphony Sid, share their personal memories of the scene they helped create, while paying tribute to the unique genius of Machito.

Manos a la obra: The Story of Operation Bootstrap [VHS]. Pedro A. Rivera, and Susan Zeig, producer. New York; 1983; Color; Spanish dialogue with English subtitles; 59 min. The documentary traces the origins and development of Operation Bootstrap within the framework of the Puerto Rican economy and history, with special emphasis on the migration from the Island to the U.S.

Monumentos históricos [VHS & Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education. Puerto Rico; Color; Spanish dialogue; 34 min. Presents an overview of Spanish influence on Puerto Rican architecture.

La mujer playera [VHS]. Federico Iglesias, director. 30 min. Oral histories of 10 women who discuss life in their coastal community near Ponce.

Música [VHS]. Gustavo Paredes, producer. New York; 1985; Color; 59 min. This film looks at the many facets of Latin music and its influence on American music and culture.

The Nationalists [VHS & Film]. José García Torres, producer. Puerto Rico; 1973; Color; Spanish dialogue with English subtitles; 28 min. This documentary chronicles the activities of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party in the 1950s.

Nine Artists of Puerto Rico [VHS & Film]. Division of Visual Arts, Department of Cultural Affairs of the Pan American Union, producer. Color; English dialogue; 30 min. Briefly reviews the works of nine Puerto Rican artists.

La operación [VHS & Film]. Ana María García, director. Puerto Rico; 1982; Color; 40 min. Examines the mass sterilization of Puerto Rican women as a means of population control. So common is the practice in Puerto Rico that this procedure is simply known as *la operación*.

The Oxcart [VHS] José García Torres, director. Puerto Rico; 1970; Color; 20 min. Based on René Marqués' play *La Carreta*, which depicts the migration of a family from rural Puerto Rico to San Juan and New York's East Harlem.

El pan nuestro de cada día [VHS]. Misión Industrial de Puerto Rico, producer. Puerto Rico; English and Spanish versions; 27 min.

Percussions, Impressions and Reality [VHS & Film]. Third World Newsreel and *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños*, producer. New York; Color; English/Spanish; 30 min. Examines the role that traditional music plays in maintaining the cultural unity of the Puerto Rican community in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

Pescadores a pesar de todo [VHS]. BUYENEI 4, producer; José Parreño, director. Puerto Rico; 1983; 45 min. Presents the different fishing techniques developed on the Island.

The Picnic (El pasadía) [VHS & Film]. Carlos de Jesús, producer. Color/Black and white; English and Spanish with subtitles; 30 min.. Depicts the everyday life of Latino prisoners at New Jersey State Prison.

La plena [VHS & Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education, producer. Puerto Rico; 1957; Color; Spanish dialogue; 28 min. A look at the development of this musical form and at the musical expression of the Puerto Rican people.

El pueblo se levanta [VHS & Film]. Third World Newsreel, producer. New York; B/W; English dialogue; 42 min. Traces the struggles of the Puerto Ricans living in the U.S., focusing on the development of the Young Lords Party.

PR [VHS]. Films for the Humanities, Inc., producer. Color; 24 min. The documentary contrasts life styles between New York City and Puerto Rico, as seen through the eyes of a 13-year-old boy and his family.

Puerto Rico [VHS & Film]. Cuban Film Institute and Tirabuzón Rojo, producers.

Puerto Rico; 1975; B/W; Spanish dialogue with English subtitles; 79 min. The first part presents a social-economic analysis of Puerto Rico, including its social classes and political parties. The second part, consists of archival footage, dramatic reenactments of key historical events, and interviews with participants in the Puerto Rican independence movement.

Puerto Rico: A Colony the American Way [VHS & Film]. Terra Productions, producer. Puerto Rico; 1982; Color; English dialogue; 27 min. This documentary examines the deepening economic crisis in Puerto Rico and offers a comprehensive portrait of Puerto Rico today.

Puerto Rico: Between Past and Present [VHS]. Creative Services Video Systems, producer. English; 20 min. An overview of an exhibition of Puerto Rican painting from the late 19th century to the present, at the Musuem of Modern Art of Latin America, representing works of some of the most important trends and movements in a span of 100 years of Puerto Rican painting.

Puerto Rico: Our Right To Decide [VHS & Film]. Stanley Nelson, director. Puerto Rico; 1981; Color; Subtitles; 30 min. This film focuses on Puerto Rico's economic and social realities. It includes interviews with students, teachers, farmers, fishermen and church people, who discuss Puerto Rico's current problems.

Puerto Rico: Paradise Invaded [VHS & Film]. Latin American Film Project, producer. Puerto Rico; 1977; Color; Spanish dialogue with English subtitles; 30 min. Examines the history and present day reality of Puerto Rico, including the contemporary relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States.

El resplandor [VHS & Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education, producer. Puerto Rico; B/W; Spanish dialogue; 51 min. Depicts a fictionalized episode in the history of slavery in Puerto Rico.

Retratos (Portraits) [VHS & Film]. Stewart Bird, producer. New York; 1980; Color; Spanish dialogue with English subtitles; 53 min. Details the life experience of four individuals who, although they live in New York City, maintain strong ties to their Puerto Rican cultural heritage.

Rhythm of Resistance: Black South African Music [VHS]. Jeremy Marre, producer; Chris Austin and Jeremy Marre, directors. 1988. Documents the joy and sorrow of Black South African music.

Salsa: Latin Pop Music in the Cities [VHS]. Jeremy Marre, producer/director. New York; 1988. Documents Salsa music in all its joy, vitality and improvisational brilliance. Performances, interviews and recording sessions with many of Salsa's greatest performers.

El santero [Film]. Department of Education, Division of Community Education, producer. Puerto Rico; 1956; Color; English dialogue; 26 min. Depicts the craftmanship of an old *santero* (maker of wooden saints) and the dignity of his work.

Sones Cubanos [VHS]. Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográfico, producers. Cuba; Color; Spanish; 110 min. Documentary on the history and development of the Cuban *son*.

Los sures [VHS]. Diego Echeverria, producer. New York; 1984; Color; Spanish dialogue with English subtitles; 58 min. A portrait of one of the poorest Puerto Rican neighborhoods in New York, Los Sures, Brooklyn, drawn from the perspective of the people who live there.

We Have Always Been Here [VHS & Film]. Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades, producer. Puerto Rico; Color; English dialogue; 22 min. This documentary traces the role of women as workers in Puerto Rican society.

The World of Piri Thomas [VHS & Film]. WNET, producer. Puerto Rico; Color; English dialogue; 60 min. Dramatizes episodes from the life of Puerto Rican author Piri Thomas.

IN PRINT

CENTRO PUBLICATIONS

HISTORY AND MIGRATION TASK FORCE

1986	*Industry and Idleness.* Frank Bonilla and Ricardo Campos.	$7.00
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1983	*Sources for the Study of Puerto Rican Migration, 1879–1930.*	10.00

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ORAL HISTORY TASK FORCE

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National Puerto Rican Task Force on Education Policy.
Bilingual Edition. 3.00

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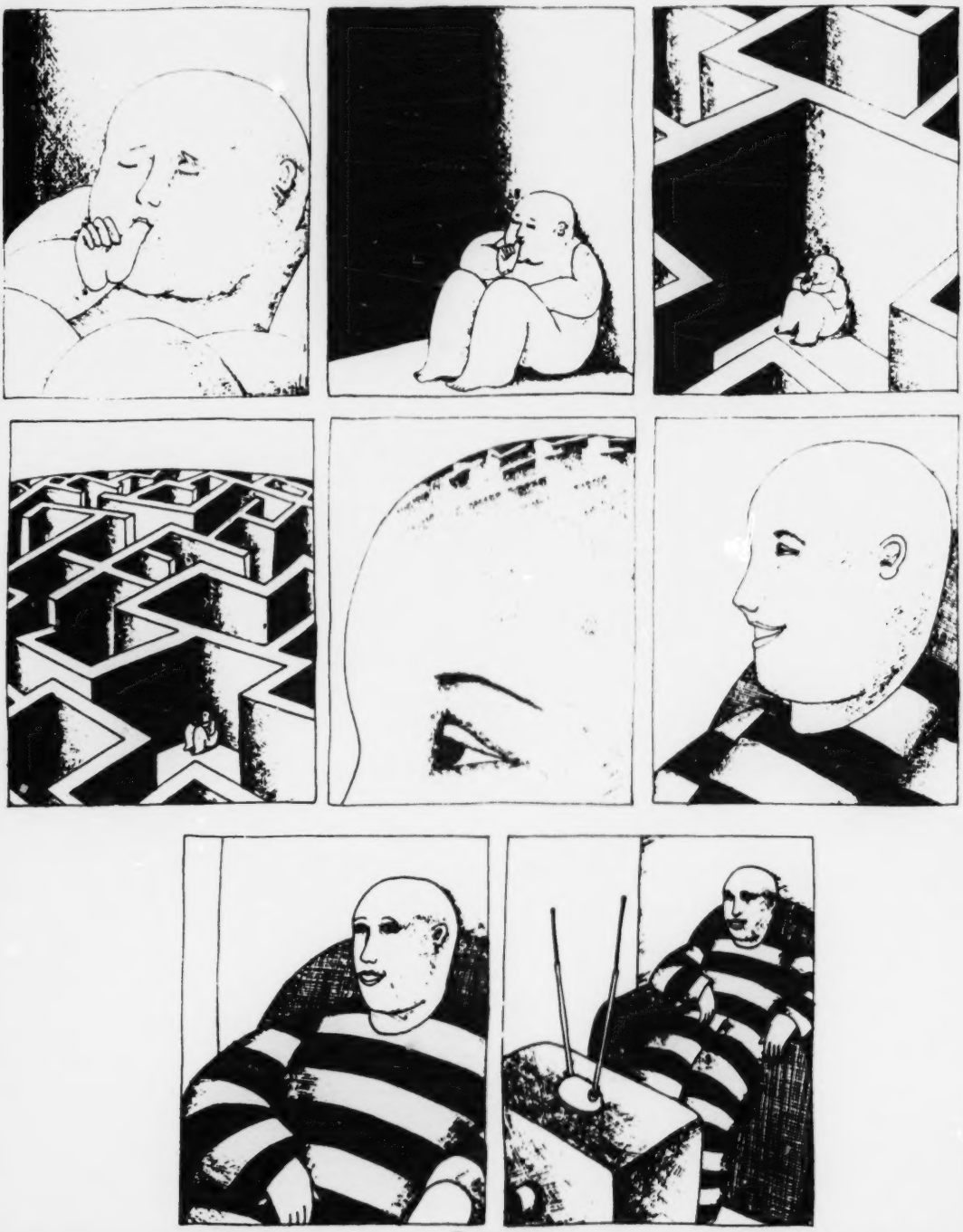

Sergio Arau

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